

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS  
RELATED TO SECONDARY SCHOOL  
PUPILS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL

by

ELIAS OUPA MASHILE

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(ii)

DECLARATION

I declare that POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS RELATED TO SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

SIGNATURE (Mr E.O. MASHILE)

.....

DATE

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my  
wife and children, Manare, Mahlatse  
and Khutso respectively.

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Glory be to God who gives us wisdom and strength.

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POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS RELATED TO SECONDARY  
SCHOOL PUPILS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL

by E.O. MASHILE

Degree : Master of Education  
Subject : Psychology of Education  
Supervisor : Prof. S.M. Mellet

SUMMARY

The purpose of this investigation was to determine socio-political factors related to students' attitude towards school.

A questionnaire was compiled based on the literature study and was completed by 306 students doing standards eight, nine and ten at a secondary school in Benoni.

Five socio-political factors were identified, namely: school experience, extrinsic motivation, pedagogical deprivation, political socialisation and school administration.

The empirical study revealed:

\* A positive attitude towards school by the research group.

(vi)

- \* Significant correlations between attitude towards school and the five independent variables.
- \* No significant difference in attitude towards school of: boys and girls, standard eight, nine and ten students and students staying with parents or with guardians.
- \* The maximum variance in attitude towards school explained by a combination of variables is 43.2%.

Recommendations are made for the enrichment of the family and school environments and areas of possible future research postulated.

Key terms:

Attitude towards school; Political factors; Social factors; Family involvement; Secondary school students; Friendships; School experience; Extrinsic motivation; Pedagogical deprivation; School administration.

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## C H A P T E R 1

### INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION, PROBLEM ANALYSIS, STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM, DEFINITIONS AND AIM

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Political, social and economic conditions have a profound impact upon the development of education (Mungazi 1991:88). The political and social instability that exists in our country has led to a crisis in education. As from February 1990, a new phase in South African socio-political history emerged. Banned political parties were unbanned, apartheid laws were scrapped and peaceful multi-party negotiations were undertaken.

Despite all these social and political changes in South Africa, nothing much has changed in Black Education (Simon 1991:589). The government has not, as yet, resolved the deepening education crisis. Historically, this crisis has been characterized and intensified by widespread political unrest, which in turn eroded the culture of teaching and learning. This political unrest was expressed through students, parents, civics, political organisations, and teachers' struggle against black education (often called Bantu/Apartheid Education). To this the state responded with limited reforms and the use of repressive measures where reforms failed to win support (Christie 1992:46). Christie represents the adverse impact of turmoil in education thus:



"Rejection of the inferior state education system has brought with it, in many instances, an alienation from learning and education in general, and a generation of students with little schooling and poor employment prospects" (Christie 1992:48).

This alienation manifests itself in:

- (a) pupils blaming themselves for poor school performance  
(Simon 1991:588-9)
- (b) unsustained school attendance (Christie 1992:47)
- (c) dropping out due to pregnancy, drug abuse, gang  
formation (Christie 1992:48 )
- (d) breaking and burning of schools
- (e) high failure rates, et cetera.

These behaviours are indicative of a negative attitude towards school on the part of the students. The negative attitudes of students toward school are, therefore, "not only a result of "school inefficiencies" as some might claim, but also of students' unhappiness with broader events and circumstances in their lives" (Chase 1992:109). For example coercion, segregation, socio-economic status, parental education, age of pupil, emotional aspects, environmental factors, and temperament are some of the factors cited by researchers as affecting the experiences and attitudes of students in schools.

The broader events and circumstances in the students' lives are social (peers, unemployment, defaced schools, socio-economic status) and political (resistance to the state, boycotts of schools, teachers' boycotts, lack of textbooks). This study will attempt to investigate socio-political factors related to

students' experiences in school, the degree of these experiences and the influence these experiences have on the students' attitude towards school.

## 1.2 PROBLEM ANALYSIS

### 1.2.1 AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM

In an attempt to redress the crisis in education (as outlined in section 1.1), the community, political leaders and organisations such as the National Education Crisis Committee have initiated a back to school campaign from as early as 1990. Appeals were made for pupils to return to school. These appeals have led to a large number of students flocking to schools.

In school, however, these students do not stay in class. During school hours, students are either hanging around school premises or they are somewhere out in the streets. Schools are dirty, defaced and school property is being looted by the very students these schools are meant for. The language, dress, and the general behaviour of students is appalling. School work (home-work, participation in class proceedings) is poorly executed or not done at all. The schools are also quite vulnerable to outside influence such as stayaways, marches, or violence in the township. Outside influence has been on the increase instead of decreasing. This is enough cause for alarm.

This behaviour indicate that students have acquired a negative attitude towards school. Such attitudes could have been determined by the experiences of the child in school or by social and political factors in the community or by both cases.

### 1.2.2 EXPLORATION OF THE PROBLEM

A literature review indicates that there is a large number of social and political factors which are related to the behaviour of individuals and/or the attitudes they possess. A summarised version of these factors is given in the paragraphs that follow.

#### 1.2.2.1 SOCIAL FACTORS RELATED TO PUPILS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL

The basic social factor related to pupil's attitude towards school is that of socialisation. For the purpose of clarity, socialisation can be described as "the activity that confronts and lends structure to the entry of nonmembers into an already existing world or a sector of that world" (Musgrave 1988:8). There are many socialising agents, animate and inanimate, that can influence an individual. According to Shelley (1975:7), a person who influences the role-learning of others is called a socialising agent. For example, as far as learning is concerned, parents, friends, teachers, and the media can act as socialising agents. It should also be noted that the impact of socialising agents is not the same. Thus teachers and television

influence the child differently as far as doing homework is concerned. Whereas teachers insist on more time at home for study purposes, television steals that time away. In a nutshell, the child's learning process is strongly influenced by socialisation.

A preliminary literature study indicates that the family (parents), friends (peer group), school and the media are strong socialising agents as far as students' attitude towards school is concerned. Other equally important socialising agents include the church, youth groups, sports, leisure, occupation, and the like. These and other factors will be dealt with in more detail in chapter two of this study.

#### 1.2.2.2 POLITICAL FACTORS RELATED TO PUPILS' ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL

As far as political factors related to pupils' attitude towards school is concerned, politics and governments can be described as two sides of the same coin. In South Africa education is financed and controlled by the government. "Education is one government service that affects every household. It is also the largest government service in terms of the amount of money budgeted for by parliament. It is no wonder then that the public takes a great deal of interest in education ....." (Department of National Education 1988:iii). Not only does the public take an interest in education, it also influences many of its activities, including pupils' attitude towards school.

As an institution, the school itself plays a significant role in the socialisation of students. The character and/or atmosphere in schools is however influenced by the educational policy. Such policies are sanctioned by the government. It is these governmental policies that have met vehement rejection from the black community, students and political organisations. A crisis situation thus emerged. This study aims at investigating the causes of this crisis and its relative effect on students' attitude towards school. A detailed discussion of the crisis is given in chapter three.

#### 1.2.2.3 STUDENTS' ATTITUDE AND SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

"In the end the importance of school lies in the individual experience of all those who are in it"  
(Cullingford 1991:13).

According to Searles (1963:29) positive experiences give rise to positive attitude towards the child's psychological self. At school, a favourable experience will yield a positive school attitude whereas an unfavourable experience will yield a negative school attitude. According to Cullingford (1991:56-181), several things can influence the child's experiences in school, namely, crowded corridors, gangs, queues, violence, humiliation by teachers and peers, fear of failure, irrelevant curricular, politics, lunch breaks, et cetera. One or more of these factors could make the child's school experiences either favourable or unfavourable. Consequently the child's attitude towards school may be either positive or negative. Chapter four of this study will further focus on this concept of attitude.

### 1.2.3 PILOT STUDY

Section 1.2.2 highlights several factors related to students' attitude towards school. The factors are obviously numerous. In order to demarcate the field of study, a pilot study was made.

Three groups of students (6 to 10 per group) were interviewed separately. All the students interviewed were found outside the classroom during normal school hours, that is, these students skipped classes. Only students who are not taught by the author were selected for interviewing. This precaution was taken to enhance participation of students and to maintain anonymity of the students so that they may express their views about the school, teachers, other students, parents, and the community, freely.

The interviews were semi-structured and questions asked were open ended. For example, How do you feel about school? What makes you stay out of class when lessons are on? What do you do after school? (i.e. leisure), Why is it that matric results of black students are so poor? Questions were only asked to initiate and maintain discussion.

Aspects which students expressed mainly concerned failure rates, peer related issues, pupil-teacher related issues, politically related issues, and school administration issues. From the many variables that are related to students' attitude towards school the following factors are selected:

- (a) Age of students
- (b) Sex of students
- (c) The media
- (d) Peer influence
- (e) Parental influence
- (f) Parental socio-economic status
- (g) School variables
- (h) Political violence.

### 1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Two research questions are formulated:

1. What is the attitude towards school held by black secondary school students in South Africa?
2. What is the relative contribution of factors like the parents, peers, the media, age, gender, the school, political violence, and parental socio-economic status to students' attitude towards school?

### 1.4 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

This study aims at :

1. Determining the attitude towards school held by secondary school students.
2. Identifying which social and political factors are related to the attitude towards school held by the students.

3. Determining which of the above mentioned social and political factors have an influence on the attitude towards school held by the students.
4. Coming up with recommendations that could enhance students' experiences in school and their attitude towards school.

#### 1.5 THE RESEARCH GROUP

The subjects of this study will be standard eight, nine and ten students of a secondary school in the East Rand, Benoni. The three standards are chosen so that students with different ages can be found. Three classes per standard will be used. In this school there are eight, nine and eight classes respectively of standards 8, 9 and 10. Classes in this school averages between 40 and 50 students. Therefore a total of between 300 and 400 students will participate in the investigation. Three classes per standard will be selected randomly, but care will be taken to include each of the three streams available at the school, namely commercial, science and humanities. Also care will be taken to ensure that the classes chosen have an adequate number of boys and girls per standard.

#### 1.6 INSTRUMENTS

A self-developed questionnaire will be used for the gathering of data. One part of the questionnaire will be used to collect background information about the students: their age, family background, peer relations, teacher relations, sex,



political participation, et cetera. The other part, also self-developed, will be an attitude towards school scale.

## 1.7 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Research hypotheses will be formulated in chapter six and will be based on the results of both the literature study (chapters 2 to 4) and the empirical study (chapter 6). The hypotheses will be statistically tested by using appropriate statistical techniques.

## 1.8 EXPLANATION OF CORE CONCEPTS

### 1.8.1 PARENTAL ENCOURAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT

Children are influenced by the atmosphere of the families they come from. According to Clifton (1978:6,7), "children are raised and nurtured within families which provide for social and intellectual development. As such, many of the personal attitudes that enable children to meet standards of excellence in school are acquired directly as a result of the social encouragement and intellectual stimulation they receive from their parents".

### 1.8.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF PARENTS

Socio-economic status is a reflection of social and economic inequalities that exist in society. Access to material or

symbolic rewards divide societies into horizontal layers and is known as social stratification (Giddens 1989:731).

Individuals and groups on the upper layers are usually rich, educated and are holding positions of esteem in the community. Such individuals or groups (including families) are said to be having a high socio-economic status. Groups on the lower layers (low socio-economic status or the underclass) are distinguished by unemployment or marginal employment, residential isolation from more affluent families (Brantlinger 1990:307), income (wage gap, household subsistence levels), level of education, and housing occupancy rates (Smith and van Zyl 1991:28).

### 1.8.3 POLITICS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

"Etymologically, the word politics descended from the Greek word which means city. ....its meaning was extended to the latin usage of the word stato ..... and emphasised a comprehensive authoritative power in governmental and political matters. From this developed the concept of the government as an instrument for the maintenance of authority and justice in society. Thus the state became legislator, upholder of the law, administrator of justice in the national community and it possessed sovereign power in exercising its authority, also in education" (Mouton 1978:47).

Politics then is the means by which power is employed to influence the nature and content of governmental activities (Giddens 1989:729). By implication, one need not be a government official to be involved in politics. Individuals and groups who are not in government do influence governmental activities and hence are participating in politics.

"Political participation includes all those activities by private citizens that seek to influence or to support the government and politics, including the selection of governmental personnel and/or actions they take" (Kuper and Kuper 1985:612).

#### 1.8.4 ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL

The definition of attitude towards school that will be used in this investigation is that of Hardwick (1970:6): "..... the student's mental, moral, and emotional inclination or tendency to react to all aspects of school, including teachers, school subjects, and assignments". This definition is appropriate for this study because of its broadness: it has scope for socio-political aspects of the school.

#### 1.9 THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME

This chapter deals with an introductory orientation to the investigation. The purpose, problem, hypotheses, method, and a preliminary literature review are also contained in this chapter.

Chapters 2 and 3 are devoted to theoretical discussions of social and political factors related to students' attitude towards school respectively, while chapter 4 deals with the nature and measurement of attitudes.

Chapter 5 deals with the planning, method and execution of the empirical investigation, while chapter 6 deals with the results and interpretations. Chapter 7 gives the summary, findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## C H A P T E R 2

### SOCIAL FACTORS RELATED TO STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept society may be used to discuss groups of all sizes (Musgrave 1988:1) or humans' engagement in social relations (Kuper and Kuper 1985:794). Individuals in a society seemingly interact in relatively persistent patterns. These interaction patterns are learned from other members of the society through a process known as socialisation.

Socialisation, according to Shelly (1975:7) is "a process of role-teaching and role learning between persons who have contact with one another". Through socialisation, therefore, a person learns the culture, attitude, norms, and values of the group/society.

Among the many socialising agents in any given society, "persons with whom an actor is in continual contact have the strongest influence as socializing agents". (Shelly 1975:12). From the many socialising agents that could influence students' attitude towards school, the family, peers, the school, the media and gender were found to be of particular importance since students are in continual contact with each of them. The

influence of these agents, as well as the implications for students' attitude towards school are discussed.

## 2.2 INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY/PARENTS

Research on topics such as socialisation, personality, attitudes, learning, academic achievement, and the like, indicates the impact of parental influence on the child. Such studies indicate explicitly that parents' actions (or the absence thereof) could influence the child's social life, his self-concept, his attitude towards people, objects and the world and his performance at school. This section summarises some of the research done on the influence of parents or the family with special reference to the pupils' attitude towards school.

### 2.2.1 CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR FAMILY EXPERIENCES

Human behaviour, according to Rohner (1986:24-5), is affected more (but not exclusively) by the way individuals perceive, interpret, or construe events than by the objective events themselves. For example, parental love could be viewed as a belief held by the child and not a set of actions done by a parent. Also, the same set of actions could be interpreted differently by people from different socio-cultural systems or even people sharing the same status quo.

Searles (1963:35-6;59) concurs with Rohner and indicates that the effect of parental behaviour depends largely on the way in which

the child perceives the parents and on the child's subtle balance of hostile and loving components in his identification with the parental figure. It can be concluded, therefore, that children's perceptions (of their family experiences) should be central in the investigation of the influence of parents or the family on the child's attitude towards school.

Children's perceptions of their families may be influenced (amongst others) by factors such as parenting styles (Musgrave 1988:55), the frequency and intensity of interactions within the family, the number of children in a family, and the experiences of acceptance or rejection in the family (Rohner 1986:60). Perceptions of parental rejection, in particular, have far reaching effects and are discussed in detail in the next section.

#### 2.2.2 EFFECTS OF PARENTAL REJECTION ON CHILDREN

Rohner (1986:69) avers that children who perceive themselves to be rejected tend to develop certain social, behavioral, and emotional problems. Research results indicate clearly that on the average, parental rejection by itself is often sufficient to produce specific negative outcomes in children's behaviour. Example of these negative outcomes include vandalism, delinquency, etiology of acting out and conduct disorders, impairment in the development of moral reasoning and moral behaviour, disturbed body image, stuttering, academic and intellectual performance problems, disturbed friendship and peer relations, and anxious introversion. Knowing that children

feel accepted, however, is not always sufficient for predicting positive psychological adjustment.

The Parental Acceptance-Rejection theory of Rohner (1986:71-86) indicates that in the absence of positive counteracting developmental experiences (such as the ability to establish a successful friendship with someone), rejected children can be predicted in six ways.

- (1) It can be predicted that rejected children mature into adults who are dependent or defensively independent. Conceptually, dependence refers to the emotional reliance of one person on another for comfort, approval, guidance, reassurance, and the like. Independence refers to the essential absence of such emotional reliance on other people, or at least freedom from the need or wish to make these bids very frequently.

According to Rohner the accepted child is generally moderately dependent. When the child senses rejection from parents, however, he or she gradually becomes increasingly dependent. When parents still fail to respond to the child's bids, he or she ultimately gives up and makes fewer and fewer bids for positive response. At this point the child appears to be independent. This apparent independence is not healthy and Rohner calls it "defensive independence". Defensive independent children usually withdraw into



themselves, turn away from their parents, or sometimes act out their hurt and anger in socially inappropriate ways.

- (2) Rejected children can be predicted to be somewhat emotionally unresponsive, to encyst their emotions, to be unable to form warm, intimate relations with others freely and openly, to be defensive, and in extreme cases to become apathetic or emotionally bland or flat.
- (3) Rejected children can be predicted to be hostile, aggressive, or passive-aggressive if parental rejection takes the form of hostility and aggression. Problem behaviour (aggressiveness, hyperactivity, and attention) at home tends to be related to the adequacy of parental discipline practices (de Jong 1993:210). Searles (1963:64-5) reports that children from the "strictest" quartile of homes show more hatred for and constraint in relation to parents, poorer relations with teachers and classmates, more worry, anxiety, guilt feelings, unhappiness, quarrels, and shyness. On the other hand, children from democratic homes are better socialised, cooperative, have less inner hostilities, are friendlier and more creative. If, however, parents deny them opportunity to express their anger overtly, they may keep it bottled up and have problems managing it.
- (4) Rejected children can be predicted to suffer a loss in positive self-esteem and self-adequacy. Children tend to

view themselves as they think "significant others" see them. They view themselves as unlovable, unworthy and inadequate human beings if their parents do not love them. They may believe that they are less competent and less masterful and behave in that way, hence poorer academic performance in children.

- (5) Rejected children can be predicted to see the world as an unfriendly, hostile, insecure, and an unpleasant place.

Rejected children often expect little more from life. That is, they develop a negative worldview that, once established, often bullies them throughout life. The effect of this negative worldview is never completely eradicated even though it may be modified and changed as the child grows older (Searles 1963:25).

- (6) Rejected children can be predicted to be less emotionally stable. That is they are likely to have less tolerance for stress than accepted children. They tend to be more prone to react to minor daily stresses with emotional upset, fits of anger, and the like.

According to Rohner (1986:69), the difference between accepted and rejected children is one of degree, not of kind. In other words all children may manifest the above dispositions not necessarily because they are rejected, but due to other factors such as divorce, death of parent, et cetera.

It can be concluded, therefore, that the child's cognitive, affective, and physical aspects are negatively affected by parental rejection. Children who have experienced or are experiencing parental rejection enter the school already at a disadvantage. Compared to accepted children they are most likely to be out-performed and out-classed at school. Such demoralising circumstances compound their problems even further. As a result, school is also perceived as a threatening place - a situation which impacts negatively on students' attitude towards school.

### 2.2.3 ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL AND PARENTAL INFLUENCE

Amongst other factors, the perceptions of pupils toward school could be influenced by their personality (Searles 1963:61). Searles reports a significant relationship between adolescents' personalities and their family experiences. Experiences of insecurity, anxiety, and tension (in the family) may often affect both early childhood development and later personality. It is this basic relationship between parent and child, according to Searles (1963:57), that influences the child's personality, and not the specific techniques employed by the parent.

Encouragement and support from parents are therefore of paramount importance to the child's personality development (Vrey 1984:100). Support and encouragement from parents help the child to participate more fully and to develop a more realistic perspective on his experience. It enhances the child's attitude towards school (Clifton 1978:66-7) and acts as a springboard for

the child to venture and explore the world without fear of separation from the parents (Vrey 1984:74).

The support offered by parents (for example by taking an active interest in the child's school activities and after school programmes) enhance the child's self-concept (Vrey 1984:100). The self-concept is a frame of reference that gives meaning to perceptions and orientation to behaviour (Searles 1963:35). It is a factor in limiting perception and acts as a selector of experience. According to Searles, the structuring of the individual's perceptions is based on his relationships within the primary group or the family.

The child's self concept also influences his level of aspiration (Searles 1963:37). The child's aspirations arise from the level of expectations given to him first from the experiences in the family. According to Clifton (1978:66-7), children's educational and occupational expectations depend on the socio-economic status of the family. Pupils from low socio-economic status families have less expectations than children from high socio-economic status families. Anderson (1987:52) also reports that "pupils from poor families, or whose parents have had little education, are more likely to see little meaning in their studies, to perform poorly in school, to dislike school, to leave [school] early and to suffer unemployment". Parental contributions are thus critical to the development and management of the child's schooling experiences (Hunt 1990:81). Unfortunately, parent

contributions differ and as a result children in school will have significant differences in their capacity to benefit from schooling. Parental contributions differ due to differences in their material, social and personal resources or in their economic, political, cultural and other forms of capital.

We can therefore conclude that parents have an influence on the child's perceptions, self-esteem (or self-concept), worldview, emotions, personality, level of aspiration, behaviour in general and consequently on the child's attitude towards school.

Parental rejection, specifically, will influence these aspects negatively. Finally, it can be stated that the family affects the child's "total" functioning, both in early development and in later life.

#### 2.2.4 EFFECTS OF PARENTAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS ON CHILDREN

Social class has an influence on pupil behaviour. Ohn (1993:154) reports that a working class girl, as compared to a middle class girl, is more likely to act in less acceptable ways. Her behaviour is likely to be perceived negatively by teachers and she is likely to experience life in school differently. Brantlinger (1990:321) attributes this state of affairs to how the child is socialised: "Students accept the intellectual status defined for them by the social structure and separate their ability from their control during schooling..... Low income students are socialised to accept inequities during school [and]

are also conditioned to expect a similar status later in life, and to hold themselves personally responsible for this outcome". As a result low status students usually have low educational and occupational expectations (Clifton 1978:137). The effect therefore, is that the existing social structure may be reinforced, not because lower status students do not develop either attitudes nor performances which are conducive to higher status occupations, but because they fail, for other reasons, to develop higher expectations.

This situation was exploited by some countries which use the school system as a mechanism to maintain class structure (Clifton 1978:142-3; Walker and Barton 1989:106). Inkeles (1982:65), in studying competence, concludes:

"We should not for a moment forget the massive and cruel formal obstacles our society has devised to prevent the disadvantaged [majorities] from sharing equally in the opportunities ... we have attained. But we must also recognize that these obstacles - such as overt discrimination, segregated schools and communities, colour-bar hiring practices, and even legal disfranchisement - are not the only barriers to effective functioning on the part of disadvantaged [majorities]. The most cruel aspect of discrimination and disadvantage lies in its ability to deprive the individual of that competence which is essential to effective functioning once the formal barriers to free competition have been breached".

It is therefore apparent that socio-economic variables (family structures, residential options, employment, et cetera) do, in fact affect the performance of students in school and their attitude towards school (Fitt 1956:30; Anderson 1987:52). However, this is a contentious issue as other researchers insist that socio-economic factors do not affect students' attitude

towards school and their achievement in school (Clifton 1978:137; de Jong 1993:210) but that they act as mediating variables.

### 2.3 THE INFLUENCE OF FRIENDS AND THE PEER GROUP

Vrey (1984:101) regards a peer group as an intimate and select group. Admission depends on mutual choice. Status within the group is a function of the group's values and the individual's role in it (Solomon and Grunebaum 1982:113). Not all children, however, belong to a peer group or to the group of their choice. Vrey (1984:101-2), for example, reports that children are admitted into peer groups on certain conditions, namely; appearance (dress styles, hairstyles), physical skills (participation in sport, relative height), social class and personality traits (humour, friendliness, cooperation with others). These factors will therefore limit an individual's choice of peer groups to join. Individuals who are, say, moody, untidy, withdrawn, hostile, et cetera, might experience rejection in groups they wish to join.

#### 2.3.1 FACETS OF ADOLESCENTS' RELATIONS WITH PEERS

To further illustrate the adolescents' relations with peers various facets of these relations are herein discussed.

#### 2.3.1.1 FRIENDSHIP

Close friendships are needed even within a group to avert loneliness (Vrey 1984:170). Friendships consist of emotional bonding in a primary relationship between "best friends". They are dyadic and reciprocal (Solomon and Grunebaum 1982:97). Solomon and Grunebaum (1982:97) report that as children mature, "friendships involve loyalty, trust, emotional satisfaction, a psychological validation of each other's identity, equality, complementarity, and reciprocity. Friendships ..... are quite fragile. They require special attention .....". They are, therefore, essential for normal development (Solomon and Grunebaum 1982:112). Friendships and other close relationships, avers Berndt and Keefe (1992:52), help individuals to cope more effectively with stressful events, psychological, social and academic adjustment to school.

It can therefore be concluded that adolescents with closer and more supportive friendships might have a positive attitude towards school as compared to adolescents without close friendships.

#### 2.3.1.2 SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE

This aspect depends on the child's personality. Sociometric studies have indicated that sociable, athletic, and friendly children are more accepted socially than aggressive, moody, sad, and anxious children. It becomes easier, therefore, for a



sociable child to find friends than it is for an unsociable child. As shown in section 2.3.1.1, the formation of supportive friendships enhance the child's attitude towards school.

#### 2.3.1.3 CONFORMITY

Conformity to group norms and values is either implicitly or explicitly enforced. In most cases, adolescents conform willingly in order to be accepted in the group (Solomon and Grunebaum 1982:114). Children may even compromise norms upheld by parents and/or the society in order to be accepted by the group. Children conform willingly because they need friendships, not just for security but for self-exploration, for learning about their own sense of identity (Cullingford 1991:175), and for self-assertion (Vrey 1984:105).

#### 2.3.1.4 HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONS

Heterosexual relations require a well established sexual identity, masculine or feminine skills, sex-linked values, knowledge and attitudes (Vrey 1984:171). During the stage of adolescence the child seeks to balance and integrate the need for sexuality (lust), security and intimacy. Hence the capacity for forming a close friendship and a sexual relationship during adolescence is a major developmental task (Solomon and Grunebaum 1982:118).

#### 2.3.1.5 LEVEL OF INFLUENCE

Peers, according to Berndt and Keefe (1992:51), can have a negative or positive influence on an adolescent's attitudes and behaviour. Peers can encourage adolescents to view their school experiences as positive, uninteresting or hostile. The outcome for any specific adolescent depends on the characteristics of the peers with whom the adolescent spends most of his or her time.

#### 2.3.2 PEER RELATIONSHIPS OF BLACK ADOLESCENTS

In her research of Kwa-Mashu teen girls, Shelley (1975:117) reports that peer groups among blacks usually consist of four or five friends of similar age. Group members in her study were all students although not of the same school. Unlike their western counterparts, black peer groups were of the same sex, had no assigned roles of leadership or specified criteria for membership. However, members of the group shared common interests and had similar expectations for the future.

Shelley (1975:121-3;131) further reports a limited and narrow set of leisure activities, namely; church related groups and activities; football activities; movies; and politically related gatherings, especially by boys. Ferreira and Mathibe (1993:5) also report that early adolescents spend a lot of time talking with peers, watching television, studying and even vandalising.

The conclusion that can be drawn from these facts is that black adolescents have little leisure activities to engage in. This is due to lack of resources. The society must therefore invest in the creation of infrastructure that will enhance the cultural heritage of adolescents. A great deal of education to this effect is thus required.

### 2.3.3 COMPARISON OF PARENTAL AND PEER INFLUENCE ON ADOLESCENTS

Biddle, Bank & Marlin (1980:1073), in their study of the relative impact of parents and peers on adolescent behaviour, report the following.

- (i) Parents and peers influence adolescents through two different processes - the expression of normative standards, and the modelling of behaviour. They state that peer behaviour is more likely to affect the adolescent than parental behaviour, whereas parental norms are more likely to affect the adolescent than peer norms.
- (ii) Adolescents respond to others' pressure directly or they respond by internalizing norms or preferences for conduct. It is found that adolescent preferences and norms have independent effects since they originate from different experiences. The researchers assert that adolescent conduct is more likely to be governed by norms when adolescents are convinced of consequences, and by preferences

when consequences are less clear. However, preferences are more central in adolescent decision making.

(iii) Pressures, norms, and preferences have different effects on adolescent behaviour depending on the content of behaviour considered. For example, parental and peer pressures have more direct effect on adolescents for school achievement than for drinking, and drinking seems to be largely a preferential issue while school achievement is more controlled through adolescents' norms. In addition, peers have somewhat more influence over adolescent drinking, while parents have more influence for school achievement.

Black adolescents were found to be influenced radically by their peers' political viewpoints as opposed to the moderate influence from their parents (Ferreira and Monyemorathwe 1993:12). Berndt and Keefe (1992:53) also report that the adolescents' perception of school and behaviour become similar, over time, to those of their friends.

#### 2.4 THE INFLUENCE OF THE SCHOOL

Schools could be viewed as social agencies (van Scotter, Haas, Kraft & Schott 1991:106-7; Parsons 1982:72) or social centres where adolescents have the opportunity to meet others and explore friendships (Cullingford 1991:175). Solomon and Grunebaum (1982:117) observe that: "Friends and enemies are a large part of school. One comes to school to see friends and one fears

school because of one's enemies". It can be concluded that peer groups (cultures) will be prevalent in schools. Anderson (1987:52) reports two kinds of cultures in schools. Firstly, there is the official formal culture which purports to attain the official objectives of schooling, which is learning or socialisation. The second culture is the peer society which varies from activities which are hostile to school to others mildly supportive of the formal purposes of schooling. The peer society is disillusioned about school, perceiving it as an institution that does not address issues in the political and social environment in which they live. Consequently, the peer society shows little interest in education but instead focuses on leisure: cars, dates, sports, popular music, movies, television, and other matters just as unrelated to school (Coleman 1982:1-2). Bishop (1989:51) argues that students from the peer society are not motivated to achieve academically, in part because they give in to peer pressure against working hard in school, or in part because they do not see schooling as a likely route to success and attractive adult roles. Lessons, however well prepared, are at best a distraction to most adolescents in the peer society (Anderson 1987:50).

Not all students, however, are part of these peer societies in our schools. Anderson (1987:51), for example, reports that only a minority of pupils likes school, another minority dislikes school, but the majority neither likes nor dislikes school, but passively accept its inevitability, gaining much more satisfaction from peer activities than from learning.

Secondary schools are inhabited by young adults although designed for children (Anderson 1987:53). This is especially true for black secondary schools in South Africa. The author's personal experience bears witness to this fact as it is not uncommon to find 24 to 25 year olds in one's class. These young adult students often have a negative attitude towards school (Davies 1977:265-6). They resent school because it keeps them dependent, fails to provide practical skills for employment (Anderson 1987:51-2), controls their use of time, space and dress (Walker and Barton 1989:135).

It can be concluded that several factors in schools do influence students' attitude towards school. For example, school policies controlling dress, smoking, lack of vocationally related curricular, failure rates that keep students long in school and sub-cultures which have their bases in schools.

## 2.5 OTHER SOURCES OF INFLUENCE

LaPoint (1992:451) points out that "the education and socialization of children occur not only in schools and families but across a myriad of other contextual settings that interface individually and collectively with youth and their families. The workplace, the media, and human service providers such as health care, housing, recreation, transportation, religious/spiritual, and law enforcement organizations all influence youth development. In recent years, these traditional contextual settings have been joined and heightened by others such as manufacturers and advertisers of youth products (eg., athletic wear); elements of popular culture (eg., entertainers and sports figures); and the peer, street, and shopping mall subcultures. As educators, we must be ever so mindful of these many contextual socializers of African youth. Most importantly, we must recognize that we can influence the kind of impact, especially negative impact, that many of

these socializing contexts and their agents have on these youth and their families".

The media and gender are examples of such contextual socialisers.

#### 2.5.1 THE INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA

"Perhaps the tendency to blame television for poor school performance is deflecting public attention from more important issues. For example, students' time with television may indicate troubled relationships with parents or peers, low self esteem, poor self discipline, or other characteristics which would affect success in school. It may be time for educators, parents, and researchers to approach television viewing as a symptom of other problems rather than as a problem in and of itself" (Roberts, Henriksen, Voelker & van Vuuren 1993:209).

The mass media can and is playing a vital role in the education of children. Ohuche and Otaala (1981:38), for instance, found that various African governments have resorted to the use of television and radio in an attempt to circumvent problems posed by teacher shortages, lack of equipment and physical facilities.

In South Africa, various organizations are sponsoring the broadcasting of television programmes that cover the syllabi of several subjects up to matric. Subjects such as Mathematics, Physical Science, Biology, and English are covered. Several school subjects as well as some courses of the University of South Africa are broadcast on Radio. Newspapers also work hand in hand with the television broadcast of educational programmes. They provide written work that is used in conjunction with the

television broadcasts. All these efforts convert the media into one of the most supportive agencies of education in South Africa.

On the other hand, van Scotter et al. (1991:25) cautioned: "In our modern, postindustrial culture, children, like adults, receive much of their education from movies, video, radio, advertising, popular magazines, and particularly television. .... much learning is incidental today. The problem is that too much of it is miseducative". It is such conceptions that led to the scientific investigation of the effect of television on children's achievement in school. The literature on this topic has been reviewed, amongst others, by Roberts et al. (1993:119-209).

According to Roberts et al., Displacement and Distraction are two plausible explanations of how television might interfere with children's academic performance. Displacement refers to the idea that time spent viewing television displaces time otherwise spent on activities that benefit school performance, namely; leisure reading, homework and studying. An extensive literature review, however, reveals little support for the displacement hypothesis.

Distraction refers to the idea that television's pace and structure somehow render the pace of schooling less tolerable, that is, it reduces children's perseverance on a task, shortens their attention spans, and/or makes them more susceptible to boredom and restlessness. Mixed evidence was found for the



distraction theory. The major difficulty encountered by distraction theorists is to find causal methods to evaluate it.

It can thus be concluded that the mass media do help in the child's general education. Exposure to such media can be of help in the development of language skills, in development of creativity, in the acquisition of specialised content, in facilitating disposition towards reading and in the dissemination of general knowledge.

On the other hand, exposure to violent films, propaganda literature, pornography, and the like, can drastically change the child's attitude towards circumstances in his situation, for example, attitude towards the police, school and sex.

#### 2.5.2 THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER

Bornholt and Cooney (1993:74-5) point out that students' perceptions of their own achievement are influenced, amongst others, by gender. Boys and girls are as such salient social groups within the classroom. In his study of students' attitude towards science, Banu (1986:199) found male students showing more favourable attitude towards science than female students. These differences could be explained as follows:

- (a) Textbooks portray scientists as men, and women appearing in domestic and service roles.

- (b) Teachers' attitude towards girls inhibit the girls' involvement.
- (c) There is a small proportion of female physical science teachers, this situation reinforces the notion that physical science is specifically meant for boys.
- (d) Parental attitudes and career advice can have a negative and discouraging effect on girls when they try to opt for subjects which are outside the traditional females' scope. Also, career advice may leave girls ignorant of the need for scientific knowledge in future occupations.

On the other hand, female students have, on average, more positive attitude towards school than their male counterparts (Clifton 1978:67; Fitt 1956:30).

Banu (1986:199) reports that: "through the socialising agency of the family, school and society, girls learn to conform to a stereotype of femineity, a learned role, including such attributes as passivity, dependence and sentimentality" and as a result they are always compliant and make less trouble as compared to boys. Ohrn (1993:147-8) also found boys, as compared to girls, to be occupying a more prominent position in the classroom: "Gender differences are found in students' own behaviour as well as in the way they are treated by teachers: boys participate more in the public life of the classroom as compared to girls, they behave in a more assertive, demanding manner and they are more readily identified by teachers, and receive a greater proportion of the teachers' attention". Ohrn

further points out that boys and girls are living in a gender differentiated society, and that they gain different social experiences from their participation in social activities and hence develop different social orientations.

According to Ohrn (1993:148), such gender differences in experiences are to be attributed to culturally established gender patterns which have an influence on structure and content in social activities as well as in expectations of gender appropriate behaviour. Boys seem to develop an orientation towards activities, structures and role differentiation while girls develop an orientation towards socio-emotional aspects and personal relations. Moller (1991:18) reports that the leisure pursuits of young township men appear to offer more opportunities for them to socialise than young women. Women spend about two and a half times more time on their domestic duties than men and thus have less time devoted to socialising.

Ohrn (1993:148) notes that even the conditions in school are in some aspects more "favourable" to boys: the organization (including teaching methods) and content of education as well as interpersonal relations, especially further up the school, are more likely to coincide with boys' social orientation or a male rationality. This condition deteriorates further as students get older: they experience more impersonal teacher-relations and a more pronounced emphasis on achievement and competition; a situation felt to be at odds with girls' social experiences and orientation, as it is suggested to indicate the prominence in

higher grades of the technical-limited rationality prevailing in the male labour market, as compared to a caring rationality developed in female unpaid work. Boys are also more likely to influence the course of events in the classroom. It has been suggested that boys develop a "strategy of power", aiming at controlling peers and the teacher in the classroom, whereas girls develop a "strategy of intimacy", aiming at personal contact. This is partly attributed to gender differences in ways of seeking confirmation of self-esteem and partly to institutional demands.

From the above assertions, it can be concluded that girls in general, behave differently from boys because they have been socialised differently. Besides biological differences, the rearing styles and social resources for boys are different than those for girls. These differences have consequences for children's attitude towards school, their careers, their leisure patterns, et cetera.

## 2.6 SUMMARY

The manner in which children are socialised has consequences for their development and success or failure at school. From the literature it was found that the main socialisation agents which influence children's attitude towards school are the family, peers, the school, the media and gender.

Parental styles, parent-child interactions, number of siblings, parental socio-economic status, parental involvement in children's education and parental acceptance or rejection all influence children's attitude towards school.

Children's attitude towards school is also influenced by peers. The peer group can influence a child either positively or negatively. Close friendships with children who like school and work hard, for example, help in enhancing children's attitude towards school.

School policies, teachers, failure, et cetera, are some of the factors that were found to influence students' attitude towards school. Girls' and boys' attitude towards school have also been reported to be different, with the school, parents and peers playing a major determining role.

Mixed results were found with regard to the media. Inasmuch as the mass media supports education, it also consumes valuable time that children need for study purposes.

The media has also been central and instrumental in focusing the political conflict, the education crisis and other socio-political issues in our country. As a result most students are preoccupied with what happens on the political arena. The influence of politics on students' attitude towards school is discussed in the next chapter.

### C H A P T E R 3

#### POLITICAL FACTORS RELATED TO STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL

##### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

"Politics and education", as Thomas (1983:1) has correctly pointed out, "live in a symbiotic relationship, with each influencing the fate of the other". In terms of the pattern of influence, this reciprocal relationship of politics and education varies from one society to another and from one era to another.

Of importance to the present study is how this symbiotic relationship between politics and education affect or influence the attitude of students toward school. The model proposed by Thomas (1983:4-30) will be used to analyze this relationship in the context of the South African situation. The analysis will be impossible, however, if the historical background of the South African system is not considered. The point of departure, therefore, will be an analysis of historical educational practices in the South African educational system.

However, several clarifications need to be made before advancing such an analysis. Questions to be borne in mind include the following: Can education be separated from politics? Can

education be depoliticized? Who controls and determine education policy? (that is, is it politicians or educationists?). Answers to such questions will indicate the role of politics in education.

### 3.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICS AND EDUCATION

Politics and education are closely intermeshed and intertwined (Mouton 1978:45). In all societies - whether modern, democratic, totalitarian, developing or primitive - education and politics interact with each other. In other words, politics cannot be kept out of education since all educational policies explicitly or implicitly contain a political dimension (Hunter 1978:27).

An education system can never be politically neutral, nor value free (van Scotter, Haas, Kraft & Schott 1991:54; Hunter 1978:27; Samuel 1990:1). In modern societies, teaching and education have become almost exclusively a governmental concern (Mouton 1978:44). Teaching and education are instruments of the governing powers employed in preparing youths to support the system of political control favoured by those in power (Thomas 1983:19). On the other hand, political parties or groups seeking to acquire power also use education and teaching to this effect:

"During the 1970 s and 1980 s, there was ongoing and increasing rejection of the education system by black students. This peaked in the 1976 Soweto uprisings, in the 1980 Cape schools boycotts, in the 1984 protests which were linked to broader protests against the new constitutional arrangements, in the 1985-86 period when the slogan "Liberation before Education" gained currency ....., and in the post-1986 period of "People's Education for People's Power" ....." (Christie 1992:46).

It can be concluded, then, that politics play a significant role in educational processes and would therefore influence what goes on in schools. Consequently students' attitude towards school could be influenced by politics.

### 3.3 POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON EDUCATION

#### 3.3.1 SUPPORT OF, AND ACCESS TO, EDUCATION

The point of concern here is how much schooling will be given to a population and who in that population will receive which kind of education. Such decisions are actually made by political bodies - especially those authorized to allocate funds (Thomas 1983:8).

At present in South Africa a state education system is predominantly used. This system includes many different education departments and authorities for different racial and ethnic groups. In 1993 there were 18 separate education departments catering for racial and ethnic groups in South Africa and its homelands (Christie 1992:39), 17 different authorities employing teachers, 15 cabinet ministers controlling 15 different budgets and 12 education acts. This way, education in South Africa was primarily financed by the state. Further, there was a significant disparity in funding between whites and other racial groups. The education system had a complex bureaucracy which consumed money that could have been spent on school children (Alexander 1990:6). According to Christie (1992:39):



"Almost as much money is spent on white education as on black education, though whites make up less than 20% of the population. Whites are provided with free, compulsory education to age 16: for Africans, education is neither free nor compulsory. Since the Soweto uprising of 1976, the government has increased expenditure on African education; however enormous disparities remain. Inequalities in expenditure pre-date apartheid and have been marked throughout the apartheid period ..... Moreover government plans in the mid-1980s to reach parity in a 10-year period were withdrawn because of lack of anticipated economic growth; ....."

These and other facts were used by opposition political groups to discredit the education system in the eyes of students. Students were politicized about these facts and called to reject the system, that is, to reject the so-called Bantu Education and everything that has to do with it - including its authorities. In this context, schools and school administrators were perceived as the "system" and hence were rejected (Alexander 1990:46; Hunter 1978:23). These perceptions, amongst others, could influence the attitudes of students toward school.

Blacks in South Africa face an education system characterized by mass overcrowding, poor facilities and undertrained teachers who rely on rote learning. Education for white children, on the other hand, is compulsory, free and well resourced (World University service 1992). The situation is worse in rural areas where conditions in farm schools are appalling. Physical deprivation is rife, attendance often irregular, and most schools do not go beyond grade 4 (Education beyond Apartheid 1971; Christie 1992:42). As a result these rural pupils receive their secondary education in the urban areas of the country. Often, these children are malnourished and travel long distances to

attend school (Christie 1992:49). Such material poverty, compounded by other factors such as overcrowding and unskilled teachers, could impact negatively on students' attitude towards school.

The South African education system lacks technical and vocational training for the bulk of the population. Black students (who are in the majority) predominate in human rather than natural and applied sciences. This is largely because of extremely poor mathematics and science teaching at school level (Muller 1990:42; Matsepe-Casaburri 1992:15; de Vetta 1993:19; Christie 1992:42). In 1988, for example, the number of students at university was four times higher than that at technikons. This is evidence of the limited provision for technical education for all groups and particularly for blacks (Muller 1990:42). Blacks are also under-represented in apprenticeships and skills training (Spies 1990:9; Christie 1992:42). A large number of matriculants and social science graduates entering the labour market will consequently face unemployment as they will not be in possession of relevant skills.

This situation has a ripple effect in that students will not perceive schooling as a likely route to find employment and success in life, and their attitude towards school may be warped.

### 3.3.2 THE CONTENT AND PROCEDURES OF EDUCATION

#### 3.3.2.1 PHILOSOPHY, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The word philosophy, as used here, refers to the purposes the educational program is intended to serve in society and in the lives of the students enrolled in the program. Statements of philosophy - that is, of general purposes and values - are then translated into specific instructional goals or objectives that are assigned to different grade levels of the school or to different non-formal programs (Thomas 1983:10).

Governments are highly concerned about the way politico-economical systems are presented to children in the schools. In certain societies open criticism of the existing politico-economical structure is tolerated whereas in others such criticism is sharply curtailed (Thomas 1983:11). The control and management of education is centralised and authoritarian (Hunter 1978:22; Samuel 1990:2). Academic freedom (Dugard 1978:36), educational initiatives such as People's Education (Christie 1992:49), teachers' trade unions, et cetera, were repressed by the state's coercive measures. According to Alexander (1990:9), the more the state tried to repress, the more the students, teachers, and the community became politically conscious and united against the state. As a result, a large number of students is conscious of the fact that its education is inferior as compared to that of other racial groups. The effect on students' attitude is therefore obvious.

The government's philosophy of life (ideology) is usually filtered into the educational policy. Constitutionally, education in South Africa must be Christian and Nationalist. The linking of Christianity and Nationalism has been sharply criticised by Schoeman (1993:31-32) as a serious misinterpretation of the Christian doctrine. The education Commission of the study project on Christianity in apartheid society in *Education beyond Apartheid* (1971:65) reports that: "..... many of our educational principles and practices in South Africa cannot be reconciled with Christian teaching on the nature of man and society". The commission (1971:14) further reports that "the South African educational system is based upon apartheid, and is oriented to separate development. In aims, content, language medium, organisation and the allocation of resources, education reinforces divisions between groups". It can be concluded, then, that the government's ideology on education enjoys no support from the bulk of the population.

All over the world, controversy exists on the issue of language, that is, which languages to teach, or which languages to use as the media of instruction or at which steps on the educational ladder are certain languages to be taught (Thomas 1983:12). As a result black students in public schools experience problems with English (Simon 1991:587). This is one of the reasons cited for poor academic performance by pupils. Simon reports that competency in English is poor: students make significant errors in spelling, grammar, style, and syntax. The possible causes of incompetency in English are problematic. Poor teaching, English

being a second language, students' attitude towards English, having to cope with a burden of three languages, amongst others, could be contributory factors. Language therefore affects students' experiences in school and could as a result influence children's attitude towards school.

It can be concluded that the South African government always had a keen interest in influencing educational philosophy and the goals of education. Its influence is evident in the many laws on education, government's clampdown on students, teachers, and lecturers, and in its violent rejection by students. Students' perceptions of "government schools" could therefore be expected to be negative.

#### 3.3.2.2 ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES

Educational administration can be viewed in either structural or operational terms (Thomas 1983:14). Structurally, the South African education system has been centralized although moves to decentralize it are currently being made. Black population in schools is rapidly expanding. However, enrolment is concentrated at the lower levels of schooling and retention rates within the system are poor (Christie 1992:41).

Operationally, the administrative system runs poorly. School principals - by virtue of executing departmental policies - have become the target of community and pupil abuse. Their lives and property are thus highly endangered (van der Westhuizen, Steyn

& Mosoge 1991:32). School inspectors (who are also perceived as siding with the authorities) were attacked by pupils and denied access to schools. Such incidents are contributing to the demotivation of teachers and principals towards their duties. Smith and van Zyl (1991:30) reports that:

"The lack of motivation by both management and teachers is therefore undoubtedly the result of secondary school pupils' numerical superiority with the attendant mass strategy of intimidatory omnipotence, calculated, hostility, aggressiveness, mob puissance, incitement, innate excitability, and often well-camouflaged criminality and moral cowardice. Slogans on walls, broken windows and the defacement of buildings and equipment add the finishing touches to the general climate"

To restore order, teachers have had to use coercive power strategies which have the effect of retarding learning (Jordan, McGreal & Wheelless 1990:44) and inducing negative attitude towards the teacher(s) concerned.

### 3.3.2.3 CURRICULA, TEACHING METHODS AND MATERIALS

In South Africa, the core syllabus is drawn up by the Committee of Heads of Education and is described as being "common" to, as well as binding, for all other education departments (Ntshoe 1991:596). Ntshoe further describes how, in many subjects, different examinations are set based on the racial group to which they are directed inspite of claims that syllabi are the same and that the administration and control of education falls under the auspices of one minister. The curriculum for black education, in particular, has been strongly rejected as irrelevant and devoid of meaning (Coetzee 1978:64; Hunter

1978:21; Alexander 1990:6-7; de Lange 1992:6; Ntshoe 1991:595). It can be expected, then, that black students would not be too enthusiastic about studying syllabi they perceive to be irrelevant.

The pilot study carried out by the author (section 1.2.3) indicates that students do experience problems with regard to teaching methods and materials used in black schools. Poor quality of written exercises, non-correlation between teacher notes and textbooks issued to students, teaching methods that are too abstract and lack of student participation during lessons are few of the dissatisfactions mentioned by students in the pilot study.

Simon (1991:585) reports that students in the rural area of Natal blame teachers for their failure. Reasons given are that teachers are unqualified, are unable to communicate the subject matter to pupils, are the enemy (they abuse pupils sexually, use corporal punishment, and are aggressive when drunk), and that they do not complete the syllabi. Most teachers have low academic and professional qualifications. In 1991, 43% of black teachers did not meet the minimum requirement of 3 years teacher training after standard ten (Claassen 1993:152) and more than 50% were below the age of 30 years (Steyn and van der Westhuizen 1993:37; Christie 1992:42). As a result most teachers are inexperienced. Steyn and van der Westhuizen (1993:36) report criticisms levied against black teachers. They report that some teachers are incompetent, that some absent themselves from

school, that some are always late, and that some have a negative attitude and are not committed to teaching. Christie (1992:42) attacks the type of teaching often used by young teachers (the so-called "survival teaching") as a type of teaching in which no questions, discussion, problem solving, pupil participation and critical thinking are allowed. Students exposed to such teachers could not be expected to be motivated and to have a positive attitude towards school.

Smith and van Zyl (1991:30), on the other hand, portray the other side of the coin:

"..... teachers' lack of motivation is the result of negative pupil behaviour. .... their reluctance, lethargy and discontent is related more to pupil unrest than to weak staff management. No person can be properly motivated when working under unhygienic, unsafe and disharmonious conditions. The whole climate of pupil insubordination must of necessity have disastrous effects on teacher morale".

Whichever way we look at it, the effect black teachers have on students is alarming.

The method of choosing school textbooks has also been a bone of contention. According to Ntshoe (1991:597) all the representatives involved in the selection of textbooks used in South African schools are whites. The books are written by whites and they are published by white-owned publishing companies in which some authorities in the Department of National Education have vested economic and political interests. The contents of these textbooks is suspect and inadequate (Kallaway 1992:54). Personal



experience indicates that the language and style used in some "science" textbooks is difficult and cumbersome for students' comprehension. Lack or inadequate supply of educational media such as overhead projectors, film slides, video recorders and others, compounds the problem even further. Absence of teaching resources and inadequate textbooks make teachers appear foolish and naive before students. As a result students lack confidence and trust in their teachers. Granted that teachers are an integral part of the school, students' attitude towards school will therefore be influenced by their attitude towards teachers.

#### 3.4 MAJOR CHANGES IN POLICY AND PRACTICE

Motlana (1978:39) indicates that the missing ingredient in black education is the will and determination by the state to educate the black child that he may realise his full potential. Obstacles such as a shortage of teachers, classrooms, funds, and the like, could be overcome one way or the other if the will and determination to do so is there.

The state has, over the years, gradually implemented changes such as:

- (a) Moves away from segregation in education by acceptance of blacks in white schools, universities, technikons and technical colleges.
- (b) Teaching of African languages in white schools.
- (c) The emergence of a variety of non-governmental initiatives for adult-education (Hunter 1978:23-8) and

- (d) An increase in the funding of black education (Steyn and van der Westhuizen 1993:37).

The state's reforms were, however, not well received. Pratt (1988:ii) avers that the majority of pupils in South Africa "..... aspire for an alternative, post-apartheid education within a substantially different social milieu". The crisis in education has always been one of provision, legitimacy and relevance (Christie 1992:39; Muller 1990:41; de Lange 1992:5-11; Motala 1992:24).

The effect of the new<sup>1</sup> education system under the new dispensation is yet to be seen. It is hoped that the issues of legitimacy and relevance will fall away and thus changes which will be made will receive the blessing of students and the entire community.

### 3.5 VIOLENCE, CAUSES OF, AND EFFECTS ON STUDENT ATTITUDES

Violence has seized South African townships and influenced every aspect of social life. It has become an acceptable mode of response in conflict situations. Its root cause in the townships stems from political power struggles. Thus consequent political violence promotes hooliganism, vandalism and naked aggression (Farren 1989:37). It causes anxiety, constrains children's

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing a transitional constitution negotiated at the World Trade Centre has been written. The constitution [with its education policy] will be effected after the 26-28 April 1994 elections.

freedom of choice and causes moral dilemmas (Moller 1991:8). Children, in particular, have experienced violence from the hands of parents, teachers, peers and the police. Violence originating from the township spills over easily into schools. Whenever there are marches, stayaways, boycotts or periods of mass killings in the townships, schooling is disturbed. Frequent and violent disruptions of examinations and lessons (by students or "other" forces) has undermined the seriousness and importance of such activities. Learning, as a result, has turned to be an unworthy exercise. Such experiences surely have a negative impact on students' attitude towards school and toward life in general.

Preoccupation with violence has a negative effect on the psychological development of children and can be judged by the extent in which children constantly refer to political violence (Farren 1989:3) in their discussions and conversation.

### 3.6 SUMMARY

Politics has always influenced education in all societies. Education has also influenced one or more aspects of politics. Politics and education are therefore intertwined and live in a symbiotic relationship. The influence of politics on education was of particular relevance to the current study and was, as such, studied. This does not, in any way, underplay the effect of education on politics. The distinction was made solely for study purposes.

Analysis of the South African education system reveals that both the government and oppositional political groups have manipulated education for their diverse political ends. Students and schools have been caught in the cross fire. The duration of the conflict has resulted in students blaming themselves for their plight. Some are unaware that learning as a social activity has been destroyed (Samuel 1990:54) and that social norms and virtues have been overlooked. Unfortunately the effects of the past will remain with our society for a while. Change will not revolutionize the situation but its effects will be gradual. One area of importance has to be change in attitude - towards school and towards the fate of our nation.

Attitude and change of attitude are complex psychological constructs that require careful definition and interpretation - a subject to which we turn to in the next chapter.

## C H A P T E R 4

### THE NATURE AND MEASUREMENT OF ATTITUDE

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Attitude (towards school) is a complex psychological concept which cannot be observed as easily as a person's physical characteristics. As a result this abstract, "attitude", needs to be defined conceptually. The conceptual definition is the starting point from which this abstract can be operationally defined and consequently measured.

Attitude has been a subject of interest in psychology and education for a long time. Researchers have to contend with a multiplicity of motivations for and against the need for studying and measuring attitudes. Consequently, a great deal of research devoted towards determining the functions and techniques for the measurement of attitude exists. These aspects form the subject of this chapter.

#### 4.2 FUNCTIONS OF, AND IMPORTANCE OF ATTITUDES

Why do people have attitudes? Petty and Cacioppo (1981:8) state that attitudes serve as a convenient summary of a wide variety of beliefs. Beliefs about movies, school, girl- or boyfriends,

and the like. In addition, attitudes help others to know what to expect from us, and as such makes the world seem like a more predictable place. Predictability, according to Triandis (1971:5), helps us to adjust to our environment. Individuals have an established repertory of reactions to a given category of attitude object. This saves us from deciding again what our reaction should be to a particular attitude object. Attitudes also help us to adjust to our environment by making it easier to get along with people who have similar attitudes. People who really count, in our social environment, tend to have attitudes that are similar to ours, and often we adjust our attitudes in line with the ones held by these important people.

Katz (1960:170-6), in a similar line of argument, described four functions that attitudes might serve for a person. According to Katz, some attitudes serve an ego-defensive function. These are attitudes which allow the individual to protect himself from acknowledging uncomplimentary basic truths about himself or the harsh realities in his external world. Attitudes may also serve a value-expressive function, in which the individual derives satisfaction from expressing attitudes appropriate to his personal values and self-concept. A third purpose served by attitudes is a knowledge function. Such attitudes allow people to better understand events and people around them. Finally, attitudes may serve a utilitarian function. These attitudes help people to gain rewards and avoid punishment.

Attitudes, then, play a significant role in an individual's life, orientation to the world, and in relationships with people, activities and events. In particular, attitudes influence how students experience, value, and perceive their school and school related issues.

#### 4.3 CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS OF ATTITUDE

There are two different approaches regarding the structural nature of attitudes. The first holds that an attitude is simply a tendency to evaluate an object or construct in positive or negative terms. For example, Thurstone (1946:39), defines attitude as "the intensity of positive or negative affect for or against a psychological object. A psychological object is any symbol, person, phrase, slogan, or idea toward which people can differ as regards a positive or negative affect." Katz (1960:168), on the other hand, defines attitude as "the predisposition of the individual to evaluate some object or symbol of that object or aspect of his world in a favourable or unfavourable manner."

A second orientation to the nature of attitudes is provided by component theorists. Here attitudes are seen as having three components: a cognitive (thought) component, an affective (feeling) component and a behavioural (action) component. Two characteristic definitions are herein presented:

According to Wagner (in Gable 1986:5):

"An attitude is composed of affective, cognitive, and behavioral components that correspond, respectively, to one's evaluations of, knowledge of, and predisposition to act toward the object of the attitude."

Triandis (1971:2) proposes that:

"An attitude is an idea charged with emotion which predisposes a class of actions to a particular class of social institutions."

According to Lemon (1973:16), the cognitive component of attitude refers to the way in which the attitude object is perceived and conceptualized, and thus represents the individual's picture of the attitude object, and his beliefs about it.

The affective component is concerned with the emotional underpinning of these beliefs and represents the amount of positive or negative feeling that an individual has towards the attitude object. The affective component, according to Himmelfarb and Eagly (1974:6), could vary in direction and intensity and is the central aspect of attitude since it provides the evaluation of the object.

The behaviourial component can be conceived as a consequence as well as a corollary of the other two components, and refers to the individual's intention to behave in particular ways, or to his actual behaviour, with regard to the attitude object.

To get a clearer picture of attitude, it is appropriate to distinguish it from other concepts which appear to be related.



The list of such terms is probably endless. Consequently, only a limited number will be briefly discussed, namely fact, belief, opinion, motive, mood, interest, value, preference and self-esteem.

There is a difference between attitude and fact. Attitudes tend to be of different duration than facts. Although facts regarding certain situations may change, people tend to evaluate these situations in the same way regardless of the change of facts (Severy 1974:1).

Lemon (1973:24-5) regards an opinion as a manifestation of an attitude which could be used to diagnose the underlying attitude predisposition. Attitudes, then, characterise a general orientation whereas opinion characterise a more specific predisposition. The term belief is of a similar nature. Himmelfarb and Eagly (1974:5) report that attitudes are beliefs imbued with emotional and motivational properties. Attitudes express a person's favourability towards an object, while beliefs are neutral in affect.

Attitudes are sometimes considered as motivating some of our behaviour (Severy 1974:2), even though they are more enduring than motives. For example, one can speak of a specific intention to achieve a particular goal, and that might be quite different from the person's evaluation or attitude towards that goal. Similarly, the concept of mood is thought to be momentary.

Although we may fluctuate between good and bad moods, attitudes tend to remain relatively stable.

In an effort to understand attitude in relationship to other elements of the affective domain, Anderson (1985:352-4) found three essential features which could differentiate attitude from other affective characteristics, namely target, direction and intensity.

According to Anderson, the most common target of attitude is a (social) object. In contrast, the most common target of interest is an activity. For value it is an idea or abstraction. For self-esteem it is the person himself or herself. For preference it is the specification of two or more targets since preference involves a choice to be made between or among alternatives.

The direction of attitude, avers Anderson, also differs from that of other affective characteristics. The directional indicators of attitude are favourable and unfavourable. For interest the indicators are disinterested and interested. For value the indicators are undesirable and desirable, unimportant and important, and unacceptable and acceptable. For preference the directional indicators are in fact the targets themselves: the directions are toward one target and away from another target. For self-esteem the directional indicators are negative and positive or worthless and worthy.

Finally, Anderson states that attitude can be differentiated from other affective characteristics in terms of intensity. Attitude is an emotion of moderate intensity, it is more or less a reactive emotion. Several affective characteristics such as interest, value and self-esteem are more intense than attitudes.

In contrast to attitude, interest is a proactive emotion. It impels a person to either covert action (attention) or overt action (acquisition). Similarly, value is defined by words such as "guides and determines" and "directing" which suggest a fairly high intensity level.

Self-esteem also tends to be a more intense emotion than attitude largely because the target of the emotion is the self. Virtually all emotions related to the self tend to be of high intensity.

From the above analyses, Anderson (1985:354) gives a definition of attitude which he believes to be unambiguous and less confusing. He states that "attitude can be considered a moderately intense emotion that prepares or predisposes an individual to respond consistently in a favourable or unfavourable manner when confronted with a particular object". The author concurs with this view of attitude.

#### 4.4 MEASUREMENT OF ATTITUDE

##### 4.4.1 THE ROLE OF MEASUREMENT IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Measurement plays a significant role in educational research providing us with useful insights about the self-actualizing educand (Mellet 1986:173).

According to Kerlinger (1986:392-3), measurement is the assignment of numerals to objects or events according to rules. A rule is a guide, a method, a command that tells us what to do. Rules, therefore, are the most difficult (and interesting) work of measurement and may be good or bad - hence good or poor measurements.

It is quite easy to measure physical and concrete aspects of a person, for example, mass, length and hair colour, because the rules are easy to draw up and follow. However, most human characteristics (such as self-esteem, attitudes, and the like) are much more difficult to measure, mainly because it is difficult to devise clear reliable rules. Actually, according to Kerlinger (1986:396), we are able only to measure indicants (or indicators) of the properties of objects and not the objects themselves.

Indicant, according to Kerlinger, is a word used to mean something that points to something else. The indicants from which properties are inferred are specified by operational

definitions: definitions that specify the activities or "operations" necessary to measure variables or constructs. According to Kerlinger (1986:397) numerals are assigned to the behavioural indicants of properties. Then, after making observations of the indicants, the numbers (numerals) are substituted for the indicants and analyzed statistically.

Also, objects and events have many properties. Measurement involves only a representation of some property and does not involve its complete description. According to Dawes (1972:12-13), the complexity of the thing being measured is irrelevant to the question of whether some property may be measured successfully or not. Yet people will often maintain that attitudes cannot be measured because of their complexity or peculiar (human) characteristics. Thurstone (in Dawes 1972:12-13) responded to such arguments as follows:

"The measurement of any object or entity describes only one attribute [that is, property] of the object measured. This is the universal characteristic of all measurement. When the height of a table is measured, the whole table has not been described but only that attribute which was measured."

As said earlier, making rules for measurement is a difficult task which is seldom perfect. The information gained through such empirical methods (measurement) cannot, therefore be interpreted in absolute terms - especially when some human characteristics are involved. The knowledge thus gained is neither fixed, complete nor universally valid. It only provides us with added information regarding that particular phenomenon.

It always serves as a starting point for more research and elaboration - never as a complete answer.

In conclusion, we attempt to measure some personal qualities like "attitude" without claiming universality or a "corpus of knowledge". Our findings are therefore interpreted qualitatively.

#### 4.4.2 TECHNIQUES USED FOR THE MEASUREMENT OF ATTITUDES

According to Anderson (1985:354), attempts to measure attitude fall into one of three categories. All such attempts require the making of inferences about attitude from some observable indicator. The categories can be formed on the basis of the type of indicator on which the inference is made.

The first category contains those methods that enable inferences to be made based on individuals' responses to a series of sentences or adjectives. Methods falling into this category are called scaling techniques and the instruments developed are called scales. The second category contains those methods that permit inferences to be made from individuals' overt behaviours. These methods require the gathering of observational data and the establishment of sufficiently strong attitude-behaviour relationships. The third category includes those methods that allow inferences to be made based on individuals' physiological responses.

Techniques based on physiological responses are expensive and require specialised knowledge beyond the scope of this study. Also, techniques employing overt behaviour requires considerations of other constraints such as norms, habit, and expectancies about reinforcement (Triandis 1971:16; Severy 1974:2; Anderson 1985:356-7). Such considerations are well beyond the scope of this study. The technique which will, as a result, be used in this study is the scaling technique of which we turn to next.

#### 4.4.3 SCALING TECHNIQUES

The concept of attitude has been operationalized in a number of ways, but most studies of attitude formation and change rely on some kind of questionnaire for measurement. Questionnaires generally assess attitudes through either self-reports of opinions and beliefs, self-reports of feelings or evaluations, or self-reports of behaviour or intended actions (Himmelfarb and Eagly 1974:6-7). The most frequently used scales to measure attitude are Thurstone scales, Likert scales, Guttman scales, and semantic differential scales (Anderson 1985:354; Himmelfarb and Eagly 1974:7; Severy 1974:4; Triandis 1971:36).

Several key differences exist among the four afore-mentioned types of scales. Semantic differential scales can be differentiated from the other three types in terms of format. A semantic differential scale consists of a set of bipolar, evaluative adjectives such as good/bad, nice/awful,

relaxed/tense. The other three scales contain sentences, not adjectives (Anderson 1985:354).

Differences among Thurstone, Likert and Guttman scales can be seen by viewing attitude as existing along an underlying continuum (Anderson 1985:354). Such a view is consistent with Anderson's definition of attitude presented in section 4.3. The target is indicated above the continuum. The midpoint of the continuum indicates change in direction. The distance from the midpoint in either direction indicates intensity.

The placement of the sentences along the continuum differentiates Likert scales from Thurstone and Guttman scales. Sentences included on Likert scales are written only at (or near) the two ends of the continuum whereas sentences on Thurstone and Guttman scales are written to represent points all along the continuum (Anderson 1985:354; Severy 1974:5).

The extent to which scales are cumulative distinguishes Guttman from Thurstone scales. Guttman scales are cumulative whereas Thurstone scales are non-cumulative (Triandis 1971:44). A cumulative scale is one in which a positive response to a sentence positioned somewhere along the continuum implies a positive response to all statements to the left of that statement on the continuum. Such assumptions are not made in a non-cumulative scale. The features distinguishing the four scales are given in table 4.1.



TABLE 4.1: Features differentiating scaling techniques (after Anderson 1985:355).

FEATURE	NAME OF SCALE			
	THURSTONE	GUTTMAN	LIKERT	SEMANTIC - DIFFERENTIAL
FORMAT	sentence	sentence	sentence	adjective
POSITION ON CONTINUUM	points along	points along	endpoints only	
NATURE OF CONTINUUM	non - cumulative	cumulative		

#### 4.4.3.1 SUMMATED SCALING [LIKERT SCALE]

Summative scales (or Likert scales) appears to be the most popular in present research (Severy 1974:6). Lemon (1973:182) gives the following conclusion after reviewing different scales:

"Summative scales are therefore the easiest scales to construct, they make fewer assumptions than other scaling models and it is therefore easier to devise suitable items, and because of their methods of selection and item analysis their content is less likely to be unrepresentative than other scales ..... they are likely to be multidimensional ....."

Further, Triandis (1971:45) reports that the Likert method of scoring is slightly superior in terms of reliability and validity when compared to other methods. Consequently, Likert's method of summative ratings will be used in this study. A detailed discussion of scaling techniques and Likert's scale in particular can be found, amongst others, in Lemon (1973:150-185), Triandis (1971:36-50), Scott (1968:204-266), Severy (1974:4-6) and Remmers (1954:87-196).

Briefly, the method of summative ratings is as follows: a large number of statements or propositions relating to the attitude object in question is collected. The items are then drawn up in the form of a questionnaire or attitude test, each item being given multiple response categories of "strongly agree", "agree", "undecided", "disagree", and "strongly disagree". The statements should be so constructed that for about half of them an "agree" response represents a favourable attitude towards the attitude object in question, and for the other half a "disagree" response represents a favourable attitude (Remmers 1954:94). The questionnaire is then administered to a set of respondents asking them to indicate their agreement on this five-point scale of agreement-disagreement. The responses are then scored 0,1,2,3 and 4 for favourable statements, and in the reverse order for unfavourable statements. These scores are then summed over all items giving a total score for each respondent. The items are then analyzed for their discriminatory power with respect to measurement of the attitude in question, by any one of several item-analysis procedures available. Items showing no discrimination are omitted in the final attitude scale which is then given to respondents, and scoring is done in the same way (Remmers 1954:95).

#### 4.5 SUMMARY

Conceptually, there is no agreement between social psychologists and educationists about the general definition of attitude. However, absence of such an agreement does not mean

that attitudes are unmeasurable. To the contrary, attitudes have been measured based on one or the other of several operational definitions.

The target of attitude in this study is the school: that is, the students' cognitive, affective, and behavioural tendency to react to all aspects of the school. The literature study (chapters 2 and 3) revealed several socio-political factors that are related to students' attitude towards school. The role and implication these factors have on students' attitude towards school is the subject of the empirical study to which we turn to in chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION: PLANNING, METHOD AND EXECUTION

#### 5.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

The following are the objectives of the empirical investigation:

- \* To determine students' attitude towards school - dependent variable - (ATS).
- \* To determine the role of the following (independent) variables on students' attitude towards school:
  1. Parental factors, that is, feelings of parental acceptance or rejection (PAR) and parental involvement and encouragement in school matters (PIE)
  2. Peer relationships (PER)
  3. Attitude towards violence for social change (VSC)
  4. School factors, that is, attitude towards curricula and education (ACE) and relationships with teachers and school administrators (RTA)
  5. The use (misuse) of mass media (MSM)

- \* To determine the variation in attitude towards school when sex, school standard and staying with parents or guardians are used as dividers.
- \* To determine which of the variables or combination of variables can best predict (or has the greatest influence on) students' attitude towards school.

To achieve the stated objectives, the following steps will be followed.

- \* A questionnaire will be constructed to measure the dependent variable and the five independent variables. The questionnaire will also be used to determine the age, sex, and school standard of students as well as the occupations of the students' parents or guardians.
- \* The relationship between attitude towards school and the independent variables will be determined by calculation of correlation coefficients (Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient).
- \* A factor analysis of the questionnaire items will be carried out to determine factors related to students' attitudes toward school.
- \* To determine the role of sex, school standard and staying with parents or guardian on the students' attitude towards

school, hypotheses will be formulated and subjected to testing. Here F and t tests will be used.

- \* Variables that best predict ATS will be determined with the help of stepwise regression analysis.

## 5.2 PLANNING OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

### 5.2.1 THE SUBJECTS

The research group consisted of 294 secondary school students of a school in the East Rand, Benoni. Table 5.1 gives a profile of the subjects. The average age of the students was 18,07 years with a standard deviation of 2,21. The minimum age was 14 years and the maximum age was 24 years.

TABLE 5.1: Profile of the subjects.

STANDARD	8	9	10	TOTAL
FEMALE	63	42	40	145
MALE	42	58	49	149
TOTAL	105	100	89	294

### 5.2.2 PERMISSION TO USE THE SCHOOL FOR THE INVESTIGATION

Permission was granted by the principal that students should fill in the questionnaire during school hours. Permission was subject to the following conditions:

- \* The investigator should administrate the questionnaire personally so that the school programme should not be disturbed.
- \* The name of the school, the principal, teachers and pupils should not be mentioned nor identified in the research report.
- \* The principal should approve the questionnaire before it could be given to pupils.

#### 5.2.3 THE "ATTITUDE" QUESTIONNAIRE

As indicated in section 4.4.3, the questionnaire is well suited for the measurement of attitudes using a large sample.

##### 5.2.3.1 THE PROPERTIES OF AN EFFECTIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

"A questionnaire is designed in such a way that it answers specific research goals. Each question should therefore be carefully formulated. A questionnaire should not be evaluated globally, but each question must be carefully weighed to determine whether the response will help to provide the best answer to the research problem" (Jacobs, Oosthuizen, le Roux, Olivier, Bester and Mellet 1989:98).

The questions asked in the questionnaire must be carefully worded and related to the context of the research problem. Kerlinger (1986:444) sets the following criteria for each question or item:

- \* Is the question related to the research problem and research objectives?
- \* Is the type of question appropriate?
- \* Is the question clear and unambiguous?
- \* Is the question a leading question?
- \* Does the question demand knowledge and information that the respondent does not have?
- \* Does the question demand personal or delicate material that the respondent may resist?
- \* Is the question loaded with social desirability?

A questionnaire, according to Mellet (1986:182) must also have the following properties:

- \* The topic or theme must be such that the respondent sees it as important so that he/she will be prepared to cooperate in completing the questionnaire.
- \* It must be attractive, brief, and as easy as possible to fill in.
- \* Instructions should be given clearly at the beginning of the questionnaire.
- \* Questions should be phrased as objectively as possible.
- \* It should be possible to analyze and quantify the response data.
- \* The items must follow a logical order and should not ask for a moral or ethical standpoint.



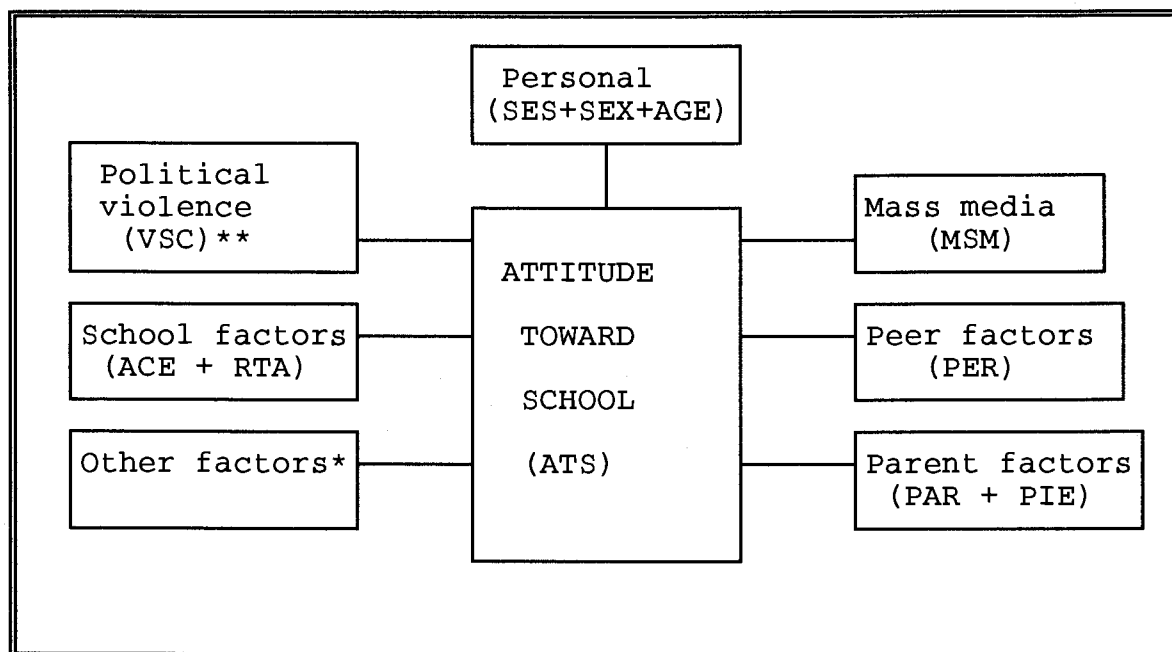
#### 5.2.3.2 FORMAT OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

It has been shown from the literature study that people are not born with certain attitudes, but that attitudes are learned. It was further concluded that socio-political socialisation, in particular, influences the child's attitude towards school. Several socio-political factors which are related to students' attitude towards school were identified. These factors can be classified as:

- \* Parental factors
- \* Peer factors
- \* School factors
- \* Political violence factors
- \* Mass media factors
- \* Personal factors

These factors are depicted diagrammatically in figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Diagrammatic representation of socio-political factors related to attitude towards school.



\*\* Abbreviations in parenthesis are explained in section 5.1.

\* It is acknowledged that there are also some "other factors" related to ATS.

### 5.2.3.3 OPERATIONALIZING VARIABLES

#### (a) INTRODUCTION

This study aims at determining the influence of socio-political factors on students' attitude towards school. Attitude towards school is the dependent variable whereas the socio-political factors are the independent variables. The independent variables are identified as the parental, peer, school, political violence, mass media and personal factors (figure 5.1).

The variables have been conceptually defined in chapters two and three. The next step, according to Gable (1986:15), is to generate the perceptions, attributes, or behaviours of a person with high or low levels of these characteristics, that is, to define the variables operationally.

Kerlinger (1986:28) asserts that an operational definition assigns meaning to a construct or a variable by specifying the activities or "operations" necessary to measure it. In other words, an operational definition gives meaning to a variable by spelling out what the investigator must do to measure it. Operational definitions, according to Kerlinger, are indispensable because they are bridges between the theory - hypothesis - construct level and the level of observation.

Kerlinger (1986:29) identifies two types of operational definitions: measured and experimental. The former describes how a variable will be measured whereas the latter spells out the details (operations) of the investigator's manipulation of a variable. The measured operational definition will be used in this study. That is, the manner in which the variables will be measured and the description of the characteristics of the variables will be given.

(b) ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL (ATS)

Students' attitude towards school is the dependent variable in this study (sections 1.1 and 5.1). Given that students'

attitude cannot be measured directly, questionnaire items are constructed so as to get an indication of the students' reactions and inclinations to various aspects of the school. The literature study (chapter 4) revealed that a person's responses to questions relating to schoolwork, participation in school activities, conduct towards teachers and mates, et cetera, indicate the person's attitude towards school.

The above operational constructs were then used as principal components in the construction of questionnaire items, for example: "My school work worries me". Respondents were then given four options to choose from, namely strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Respondents scored 1 for strongly disagreeing with a positive statement and 4 for strongly agreeing with a positive statement. The scores are reversed for a negative statement. That is, strongly disagree carries a score of 4 whereas strongly agree carries a score of 1. The respondent's scores are then summed up. The total score obtained by a respondent (the score can range from a minimum of 13 to a maximum of 52) gives an indication of the strength and intensity of the respondent's attitude towards school.

(c) PARENTAL FACTORS (PAR and PIE)

The literature study (section 2.2) made it clear that two variables could be distinguished under parental factors, namely parental acceptance or rejection (PAR), and parental involvement and encouragement in school matters (PIE).

From the literature study (section 2.2.2), it became clear that parental rejection/acceptance influences students' attitude towards school. PAR will be measured by constructing items based on concepts such as punishment, interactions, discipline, parental love, parental care, and the like, for example, "My parents love me".

The literature study (section 2.2.3) also revealed that parents who encourage and are actively involved in their children's education enhances students' attitude towards school. Items which relate to parental expectations, interest, praise, encouragement, et cetera will be included in the questionnaire to measure parental involvement and encouragement, for example, "My parents are expecting me to do well at school".

As in 5.2.3.3 (b) above, a four point scale is used and students' responses are scored as follows: strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, disagree = 2 and strongly disagree = 1 for a positive statement. Scoring is reversed for a negative statement. A total of 14 items related to parental factors are formulated and the respondent's scores along the minimum - maximum continuum indicates the role of parental factors on students' attitude towards school.

(d) PEER FACTORS (PER)

Peer related factors play a significant role in the formation of students' attitude towards school (section 2.3). The literature

study has shown that students with close friendships that are supportive as far as schooling is concerned have a positive attitude towards school. On the other hand, students without friends and/or those with friends who dislike school have been shown to have a negative attitude towards school.

Peer influence will be measured by constructing items that refer to loneliness, encouragement by friends in school matters, importance of friends, independence from friends, et cetera. For example, "My friends influence me to study and behave well at school". The response type varies from strongly agree to strongly disagree in a Likert-type four point scale. Individual items are scored as follows: strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, disagree = 2 and strongly disagree = 1 for positive statements. The scores are reversed for a negative statement. Respondents' agreement or disagreement with the items will provide an indication of the role of peers on students' attitude towards school. Respondents who score high along the minimum-maximum continuum represent students with close friendships which are supportive in school related matters.

(e) SCHOOL FACTORS (ACE and RTA)

The literature study (section 2.4) has shown that the school (teachers, administrators, curricula and education) influences students' attitude towards school - either positively or negatively depending on the circumstances. Items related to how students agree or disagree concerning textbooks, language burden,

type and number of schools in the townships, quality of teachers, teaching methods, and the like, will give an indication of the role of school factors on students' attitude towards school.

An example of an item in this field is: "The textbooks that we read at school are good". A four point Likert - type category of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree will be used. A "strongly agree" response will be scored 4 and a "strongly disagree" response will be scored 1 for all positive statements. For negative statements, however, the scores will be reversed.

(f) POLITICAL VIOLENCE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE (VSC)

A study of the literature (chapter 3) indicates that political violence in black townships has resulted in the collapse of respect for propriety, learning, aesthetical values, et cetera. A culture wherein problems are solved through violent means has been inculcated in children. To some, such violent means are justified because they are perceived as instruments for social change. Yet, to others, violence is perceived as a stumbling block in the path of effective learning.

Attitude towards violence will be measured by constructing items that relate to students' politeness, tolerance, condonement of riots, damage to government property, and the like, for example, "It is good to protest (riot) against teachers who use corporal punishment". Respondents are then given four choices varying

from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A response of strongly agree is then scored 4 and that of strongly disagree is scored 1 for all positive statements. The values are reversed for negative statements. The respondent's scores are then summed up and the total score gives an indication of the role of political violence on students' attitude towards school.

(g) MASS MEDIA (MSM)

From the literature study (section 2.5.1), it became evident that the mass media (television, daily newspapers, magazines and radio) can stimulate students' attitude towards school positively or negatively. Questions relating to time spent on media, preference for the media than school teachers, educational programmes on the media, and so forth will be used as indicators of the influence of the media on students' attitude towards school.

Questionnaire items such as "I think educational programmes on television are boring" will be used to determine the role of this factor on students' attitude towards school. Here also, the student is given four options to choose from: strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. A response of strongly agree equals four and that of strongly disagree equals one for a positive statement. A response of strongly agree, however, equals one for a negative statement and that of strongly disagree equals four. The sum total of each respondent yields an indica-



tion of the role of the mass media on students' attitude towards school.

(h) PERSONAL FACTORS (SES, AGE and SEX)

Items in this field refer to the students' biographical information. The students will be asked to indicate their gender, age in years, school standard and the occupation of their parents or guardians. The items will be scored as follows:

- \* male = 1 and female = 0
- \* staying with parent = 1; staying with guardian = 0

5.2.3.4 CONSTRUCTION OF ITEMS

The concepts necessary to establish the content and purpose of the individual items were formulated and categorised according to the seven areas given in diagram 5.1. In the area of parents, for example, the concepts used include the following: interaction with parents, family warmth, parental discipline, parental expectations, parental interest, and the like.

Far more items were constructed than were necessary based on the assumption that about half of the initial items would fail to prove suitable for one reason or another (Fulton 1965:35). The items were constructed so that respondents can indicate whether they agree or disagree with the given statement. In order to avoid a neutral position by respondents, a four - point category

of "strongly agree" (SA); "agree" (A); "disagree" (D) and "strongly disagree" (SD) will be utilized.

An example of a completed item follows:

I enjoy writing school tests.	SA	A	D	SD
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The actual item construction was accomplished in light of the criteria set forth by Wang (in Fulton 1965:37). These criteria are:

- \* An attitude statement must be debatable. It must represent only an opinion which has no general acceptance. Thus a universal truth or a statement of fact should never be used in an attitude scale.
- \* All statements on a given issue should belong, as nearly as can be judged, to the same attitude variable.
- \* An attitude statement must not be susceptible to more than one interpretation.
- \* Avoid "double-barrelled" statements.
- \* An attitude statement should be short. It should rarely exceed 15 to 20 words in length.
- \* Each attitude statement should be complete in denoting a definitive attitude towards a specific issue.
- \* Each statement should contain only one complete thought.
- \* Avoid grouping two or more complete sentences as one attitude statement.
- \* An attitude statement should be clear-cut and direct.
- \* Use with care and moderation such words as only, mere, just, and the like.

- \* Avoid expressions or statements lacking affect.
- \* Whenever possible, write statements in the form of a simple sentence, write it as a complex rather than a compound one.
- \* Use active rather than passive voice.
- \* In general, use the term of the issue as the subject of a statement.
- \* Avoid high - sounding words, uncommon words or expressions, technical terms not ordinarily understood, et cetera.

Also, in the wording of the items, the words "I" and "me" were constantly used. This allows the respondent to be subjective and to identify with the item (Mellet 1986:186). Further, Severy (1974:7) gives the following guidelines:

- \* Items should be worded in both positive and negative directions, that is, half of the items must be written in a favourable direction and the other half in an unfavourable direction.
- \* The order of the items should be randomized and a check should be made to ensure that not more than four or five positively or negatively worded items occur in sequence.

Examples from several sources and scales were used to construct the items. Part of the items were used as is and part were formulated to meet the criteria set above. The sources consulted are:

"A study of attitude towards school" by Fitt (1956); "Die gemotiveerdheidsvraelys" by Mellet (1986); "Survey on attitude towards violence" by Blumenthal, Kahn, Andrews & Head (1972); "Gable-Roberts attitude towards teacher scale" (in Gable 1986); "Attitude survey" by Louth, McAllister and McAllister (1993); "Aberdeen academic motivation inventory" by Entwistle (1968); Shaw and Wright (1967); Edwards (1957); Epstein and McPartland (1976); Chase (1982); Mulliken (1966); and Mellet (1983).

#### 5.2.4 INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Written instructions on the first page of the questionnaire will be given to respondents. The purpose is to make it clear to respondents what is expected from them and the manner in which they ought to fill in the questionnaire. The following information will be provided to respondents:

- \* Respondents are told that they are not being tested and only their opinions are required. Since the answer requires opinions, there will be no wrong or right answer.
- \* Respondents are urged to be honest in their response and to respond according to their own feelings.
- \* Respondents are reassured that their answers are confidential and no one else (the school or parents) will have access to their responses. As such their names are not required.
- \* Respondents are asked to answer as quickly as possible but to make sure that they answer all questions.

- \* Respondents are urged to be free to ask if they do not understand any aspect or statement in the questionnaire.
- \* An example of how responses should be made is given on the chalk board as follows:

My teachers are very helpful                      SA   A   D   SD

- \* Finally, respondents are thanked in advance for their cooperation and asked to begin filling in the questionnaire.

#### 5.2.5 PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was compiled and given to a number of teachers to make comments on the suitability of items, word difficulty, improvements, et cetera. Several items were modified from the input given by the teachers.

A preliminary investigation was made by giving the questionnaire to a number of students during the winter school holidays. The students took an average of thirty minutes to complete the questionnaire. Two items gave the students some difficulty in understanding the statement. These items were rephrased later.

Finally the questionnaire was given to professors and lecturers at the University of South Africa (Department of Educational Psychology). The questionnaire (Appendix A) currently stand at 77 items distributed into seven categories

(fields). The grouping of the items into different categories is given in table 5.2.

#### 5.2.6 STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES

##### 5.2.6.1 FACTOR ANALYSIS

The objective here is to identify common characteristics or factors in the items of the questionnaire. Thus a large number of characteristics which describe the seven variables can be reduced to a smaller number of factors or components.

The factor analysis will be computed using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) program (Kim and Mueller 1978:60-4, SAS Institute 1985:335).

TABLE 5.2: Grouping of items into their respective fields.

CATEGORY (FIELD)		ITEM NUMBERS	TOTAL
PARENT FACTORS	Parental acceptance or rejection (PAR)	8; 16; 34; 46; 55; 51; 57.	14
	Parental involvement and encouragement (PIE)	9; 17; 33; 60; 64; 66; 71.	
SCHOOL FACTORS	Attitude towards curricula and education (ACE)	3;12;29;30;36;38 56;62;67;69.	21
	Relationship with teachers and administrators (RTA)	4;7;18;21;24;44;47 61;63;65;68.	
ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL (ATS)		1;10;31;32;40;43; 49;50;52;54;59;72; 70.	13
POLITICAL VIOLENCE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE (VSC)		6;13;19;20;37;39; 41;42.	8
MASS MEDIA (MSM)		14;23;25;26;45; 48;58.	7
PEER FACTORS (PER)		2; 5;11;15;27;28; 35;53;22.	9
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS (SES)		76;77.	2
AGE		74	1
SEX		73	1
SCHOOL STANDARD		75	1
TOTAL			77

Factor analysis also serves to confirm or refute the instrument's construct validity:

"If the process of factor analysis groups together the items in a questionnaire in such a way that they indicate the fields as they were initially identified, the researcher can state explicitly that his instrument has construct validity" (Jacobs *et al.* 1989:159).

#### 5.2.6.2 ITEM ANALYSIS

Item analysis will be carried out on each category of the questionnaire. For each item, the average, the standard deviation and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient will be calculated for each of the various categories (fields) of the questionnaire individually. The purpose here is to determine whether the item correlates well with the particular field for which it was intended. Items that fail to show significant correlations with the intended field are then eliminated so as to obtain a higher reliability coefficient.

#### 5.2.6.3 TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

Analysis of variance enables researchers to determine whether one or more independent variables influence the variance of the dependent variable. To determine the variation in attitude towards school when sex, school standard and staying with parents or guardians are used as dividers, use will be made of the SAS programmes (SAS Institute 1985:113). The stated hypotheses will be tested using the F and t tests.

#### 5.2.6.4 REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Stepwise regression is a statistical technique that enables researchers to examine the correlation between a dependent variable and a series of independent variables. The correlation will be used to calculate how much variance has been caused in



the dependent variable by the linear combination of the independent variables. Here also, use will be made of the SAS programmes (SAS Institute 1985:763).

### 5.3 COMPLETION AND TREATMENT OF DATA

The questionnaire was administered in the first week of October, 1994, just before students sat for their final examinations. Because of time constraints (for example, students not coming back to school after the lunch break), the researcher enlisted the services of three teachers in the school. The teachers were briefed about the purpose of the research and how the questionnaire ought to be filled. Table 5.3 gives a summary of the number of students who responded to the questionnaire. A number of students were no longer attending lessons under the pretext of studying in preparation for examinations.

TABLE 5.3: Subjects who completed the questionnaire.

STANDARD	CORRECT FORMS	WRONG FORMS	TOTAL
8	105	5	110
9	101	7	108
10	88	-	88
TOTAL	294	12	306

The correct forms were coded by the researcher to be used as input into the computer. The coded data was then read into a computer at the University of South Africa. Use was made of the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) programmes for carrying out the statistical analysis.

#### 5.4 SUMMARY

The design of the empirical investigation was done in this chapter. The objectives of the study, as well as the statistical methods that will be used to meet these objectives were set up.

It was also decided to make use of the questionnaire for gathering information from respondents. The rationale behind this choice as well as mechanisms to be followed in the preparation of the questionnaire were also given.

Since a self constructed questionnaire will be used, the criteria of item construction and pitfalls to avoid were also discussed. Finally, the procedure used in the empirical investigation was outlined and the results and interpretation of the results will be given in chapter 6.

## CHAPTER 6

### RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The results and interpretation of the empirical study will be given in this chapter.

The literature study (chapters 2-4) revealed a host of factors that could influence students' attitude towards school. In constructing the questionnaire used in this investigation, an attempt was made to categorise or identify possible variables relating to the socio-political sphere. Because of the interrelationship of these factors, it could not be asserted with certainty that the grouping of items in table 5.2 is the most appropriate - hence a factor analysis of the 59 items of the questionnaire relating to the independent variables (table 5.2) was made.

The categories identified by factor analysis were then subjected to an item analysis. Items which did not contribute significantly to the field-total were left out. The remaining items were subjected to analysis of variance and regression analysis in order to test hypotheses and identify predictors of attitude towards school.

## 6.2 FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor analysis is used to determine whether items in a questionnaire have something in common. This communality of items means that items are grouped together to form a "construct". In this manner, the items in the questionnaire are reduced to only a few factors or constructs (Mulder 1989:132).

The first step in factor analysis is the construction of an intercorrelation matrix. With the aid of the eigen values of the intercorrelation matrix one can determine how many factors will be singled out. In this regard the Kaiser criterion is used. According to this criterion the factors with an eigen value greater than one are singled out (Child 1976:43).

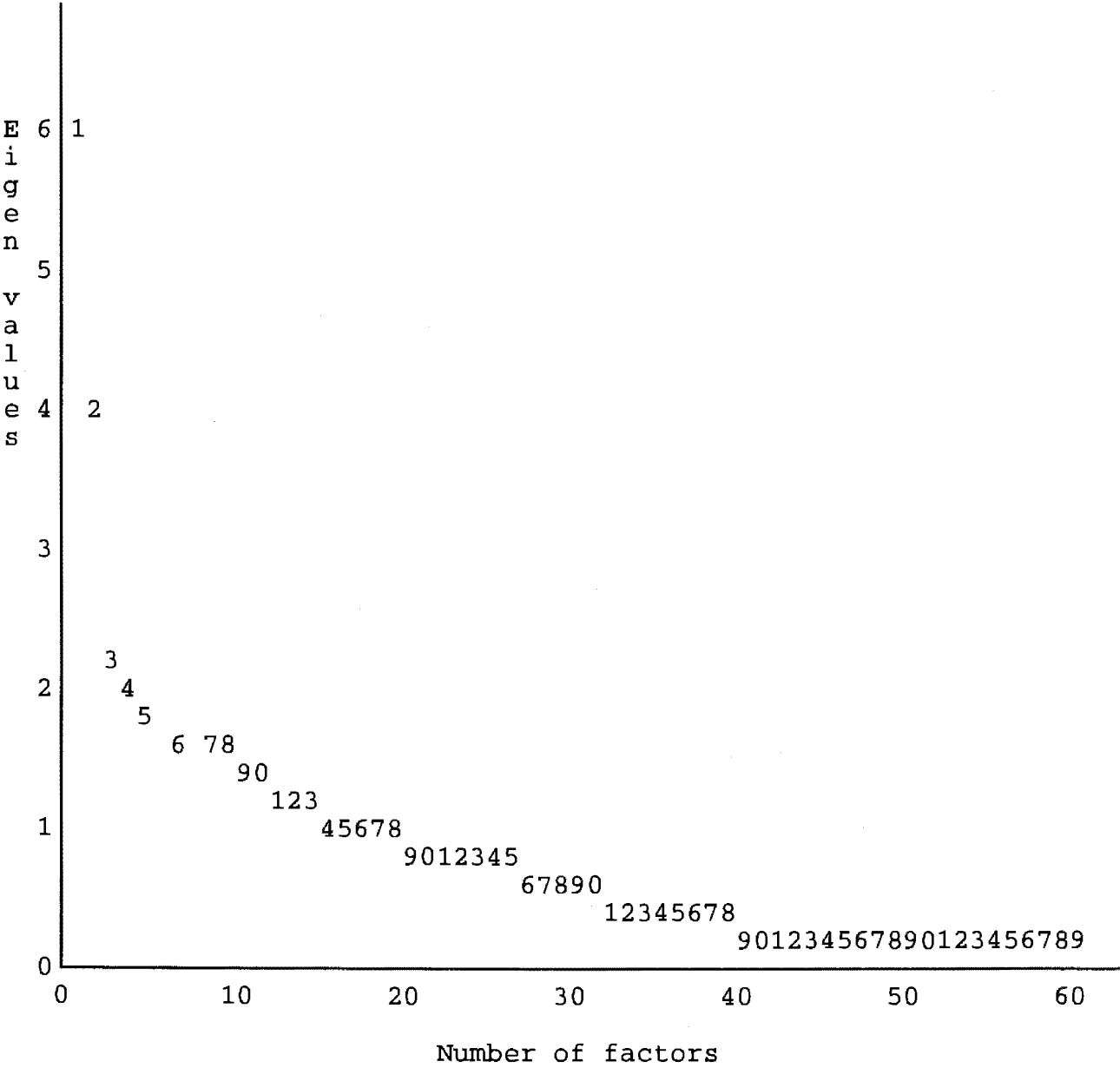
The eigen values of the intercorrelation matrix of the first factor analysis are given in table 6.1. From table 6.1, twenty one factors have eigen values greater than one. Since this is a large number of factors, an alternative method of making a decision on how many factors should be retained was used, namely the Scree test (Hakstian, Rogers and Cattell 1982:194).

TABLE 6.1: Factors and eigen values of the first factor analysis

FACTOR	EIGEN VALUE	CUMULATIVE VARIANCE (%)	FACTOR	EIGEN VALUE	CUMULATIVE VARIANCE (%)
1	5,952	10,09	31	0,746	77,66
2	4,026	16,91	32	0,717	78,87
3	2,345	20,89	33	0,695	80,05
4	1,952	24,19	34	0,686	81,21
5	1,827	27,29	35	0,654	82,32
6	1,748	30,25	36	0,645	83,42
7	1,682	33,10	37	0,596	84,43
8	1,627	35,86	38	0,586	85,42
9	1,539	38,47	39	0,576	86,39
10	1,457	40,94	40	0,566	87,35
11	1,417	43,34	41	0,548	88,28
12	1,358	45,64	42	0,537	89,19
13	1,284	47,82	43	0,526	90,08
14	1,235	49,91	44	0,505	90,94
15	1,214	51,97	45	0,471	91,74
16	1,185	53,98	46	0,456	92,51
17	1,158	55,94	47	0,444	93,26
18	1,091	57,79	48	0,421	93,98
19	1,044	59,56	49	0,403	94,66
20	1,029	61,30	50	0,397	95,33
21	1,011	63,02	51	0,373	95,96
22	0,980	64,68	52	0,363	96,58
23	0,964	66,31	53	0,356	97,18
24	0,961	67,94	54	0,336	97,75
25	0,923	69,51	55	0,306	98,27
26	0,885	71,01	56	0,288	98,76
27	0,831	72,42	57	0,274	99,22
28	0,802	73,78	58	0,236	99,62
29	0,793	75,12	59	0,223	100,00
30	0,752	76,39			

According to Race and Planek (1992:173), the Scree-test can be described as a graph of eigenvalues plotted along the ordinate (y-axis) and factors plotted along the abscissa (x-axis) - figure 6.1. The first distinct break (discontinuity) in the curve indicates the number of factors which can be singled out. Applying this rule to figure 6.1 indicates that five factors may be singled out.

FIGURE 6.1: SCREE PLOT OF EIGEN VALUES (PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS)



Consequently, a second factor analysis with five factors was done. The factors were rotated using the Varimax method and the results are given in table 6.2.

TABLE 6.2: Factor analysis with five factors (Varimax rotation)

ITEM	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3	FACTOR 4	FACTOR 5	COMMUNALITY
30	0.671	0.116	-0.004	-0.049	0.081	0.473
29	0.591	0.133	0.022	-0.062	0.011	0.371
21	0.537	0.154	0.185	-0.096	0.008	0.355
7	0.528	0.086	0.008	0.142	0.060	0.310
56	0.432	-0.014	-0.291	-0.003	-0.078	0.278
12	0.421	0.005	0.222	-0.062	-0.366	0.365
69	0.415	0.034	-0.250	0.212	-0.068	0.285
65	0.391	0.241	0.142	0.096	-0.110	0.252
16	0.387	0.222	-0.069	-0.118	-0.094	0.227
62	0.374	0.151	-0.178	0.126	-0.067	0.215
26	0.370	0.368	0.065	-0.256	-0.173	0.371
5	0.359	0.104	0.245	-0.032	-0.108	0.212
19	0.322	0.317	-0.029	-0.080	-0.089	0.219
24	0.301	0.173	0.136	0.068	-0.080	0.150
22	-0.281	0.062	0.189	0.179	0.072	0.156
41	-0.425	0.068	-0.015	0.411	-0.017	0.355
34	-0.002	0.569	-0.011	0.001	-0.133	0.342
71	-0.140	0.545	0.229	0.086	-0.037	0.378
60	-0.016	0.533	0.183	-0.078	0.112	0.336
45	-0.041	0.492	-0.265	0.189	-0.042	0.351
58	0.215	0.486	0.069	0.061	-0.156	0.315
25	0.153	0.481	0.075	0.101	-0.291	0.355
51	0.133	0.471	0.161	0.182	0.078	0.305
8	0.213	0.471	0.065	-0.096	-0.097	0.290
17	0.137	0.432	0.286	-0.173	-0.081	0.324
63	0.183	0.400	0.089	-0.037	-0.151	0.225
48	0.065	0.391	0.006	-0.142	-0.235	0.233
64	-0.231	0.390	-0.346	-0.100	-0.109	0.347
53	-0.100	0.282	-0.223	-0.232	-0.080	0.200
37	0.186	0.245	-0.107	-0.020	-0.100	0.116
23	0.224	0.228	0.135	0.006	-0.171	0.149
55	-0.035	0.246	0.608	0.064	0.173	0.466
33	-0.187	0.313	0.560	0.086	0.158	0.381
57	-0.055	0.069	0.521	0.033	-0.106	0.292
15	-0.007	0.089	0.519	0.177	-0.174	0.339
14	-0.049	0.112	0.495	0.195	-0.078	0.304
9	0.055	0.105	0.417	0.345	-0.215	0.353
11	0.097	0.002	0.385	0.332	-0.033	0.270
66	0.091	0.327	0.354	0.134	0.258	0.325
38	-0.091	-0.033	0.349	0.314	0.280	0.309
2	-0.031	-0.119	0.272	-0.174	0.059	0.123
44	0.079	0.170	0.249	0.060	0.010	0.101
13	0.161	0.050	0.161	0.017	-0.062	0.059
4	0.309	0.096	-0.327	0.056	0.127	0.231
42	-0.136	-0.052	-0.084	0.640	0.030	0.438
20	-0.008	-0.115	-0.090	0.534	0.080	0.312
28	0.192	-0.194	0.186	0.433	-0.185	0.331
6	0.073	0.022	0.240	0.425	-0.049	0.246
27	-0.122	-0.174	0.162	0.416	-0.053	0.247
3	0.232	-0.002	0.054	0.256	0.055	0.126
61	0.274	-0.042	-0.262	0.078	0.469	0.372
36	0.061	0.143	0.166	0.097	0.430	0.246
67	-0.042	-0.140	-0.093	-0.045	0.427	0.215
68	0.290	-0.041	-0.141	-0.036	0.425	0.287
47	0.003	-0.066	0.105	-0.017	0.406	0.181
46	-0.168	-0.118	0.068	-0.074	0.321	0.155
39	-0.134	0.198	-0.164	0.101	-0.221	0.143
18	0.157	0.224	0.026	0.247	-0.267	0.208
35	0.164	0.179	-0.066	-0.224	-0.267	0.185

### 6.2.1 INTERPRETATION OF THE FACTORS

Factors are interpreted by concentrating on items that load highest on a particular factor. For example, in table 6.2, item 26 has loadings of 0.370 and 0.368 respectively on factors one and two. Consequently item 26 is grouped under factor one.

After analysis of the factor matrix in table 6.2, the factors are interpreted as follows:

#### 6.2.1.1 FACTOR 1

Items with the highest loadings on factor one are items 30, 29, 21, 7, 56, 12, 69, 65, 16, 62, 26, 5, 19, 24, 22, and 41.

Factor one relates to students' experiences in school.

Factor one is therefore named School experience (SE).

#### 6.2.1.2 FACTOR 2

It is evident from table 6.2 that the following items have highest loadings on factor two: items 34, 71, 60, 45, 58, 25, 51, 8, 17, 63, 48, 64, 53, 37, and 23.

Items in factor two relates to external motivation provided by parents and the mass media.

Factor two is therefore named Extrinsic motivation (EM).



#### 6.2.1.3 FACTOR 3

Items with highest loadings on factor three are items 55, 33, 57, 15, 14, 9, 11, 66, 38, 2, 44, 13, and 4.

These items relate to pedagogical deprivation - that is negative or inadequate pedagogical support from parents (items 55, 33, 57, 9, 66), friends (items 15, 11, 2, 13) and the schooling system (items 14, 38, 44, 4).

Factor three is thus named Pedagogical deprivation (PD).

#### 6.2.1.4 FACTOR 4

It is evident from table 6.2 that the following items have highest loadings on factor four: items 42, 20, 28, 6, 27, and 3.

All items in this factor relates to how students have been socialized politically.

Factor four is therefore called Political socialisation (PS).

#### 6.2.1.5 FACTOR 5

Table 6.2 indicates that the following items have highest loadings on factor five: items 61, 36, 67, 68, 47, 46, 39, 18, and 35.

The items in this factor relate to aspects pertaining to school administration.

Factor five is therefore called School administration (SA).

### 6.2.2 SYNTHESIS

The results of the factor analysis (section 6.2) indicate that the items in the questionnaire can be grouped into five factors or constructs. These constructs relate to the socio-political factors influencing students' attitude towards school. The grouping of items as in table 5.2 is therefore done away with, and a new grouping is given in table 6.3.

TABLE 6.3: Final grouping of items into categories.

FACTOR	ITEM NUMBER
Attitude towards school* (ATS)	1; 10; 31; 32; 40; 43; 49; 50; 52; 54; 59; 72; 70.
School experience (SE)	30; 29; 21; 7; 56; 12; 69; 65; 16; 62; 26; 5; 19; 24; 22; 41.
Extrinsic motivation (EM)	34; 71; 60; 45; 58; 25; 51; 8; 17; 63; 48; 64; 53; 37; 23.
Pedagogical deprivation (PD)	55; 33; 57; 15; 14; 9; 11; 66; 38; 2; 44; 13; 4.
Political socialisation (PS)	42; 20; 28; 6; 27; 3.
School administration (SA)	61; 36; 67; 68; 47; 46; 39; 18; 35.

\* Items were not included in factor analysis since they form the dependent variable.

### 6.3 ITEM ANALYSIS

An item analysis was done for each category in table 6.3. The aim being to establish whether each of the items made a significant contribution to its particular category. In the case where an item correlates very low or negatively with the total of that particular category (factor), that item would be left out.

Another aim of item analysis is the calculation of the Alpha reliability coefficient. The reliability coefficient is calculated for each category. The coefficient is calculated twice, when all items are retained and when specific items are left out. On the basis of the item-total correlation, and the reliability coefficient, it is then decided whether a specific item must be retained or should be left out. The results are given in tables 6.4 to 6.9.

TABLE 6.4: Item analysis of the category: school experience

Number of subjects	294
Number of items	16
Alpha reliability coefficient	0.641 (*0.743)
Mean	39.786
Standard deviation	6.308

ITEM	MEAN	S	CORRELATION WITH TOTAL	ALPHA IF ITEM IS LEFT OUT
7	2.799	0.933	0.399	0.605
30	2.640	1.077	0.481	0.588
29	2.881	0.983	0.463	0.594
21	3.027	0.725	0.384	0.613
56	2.085	1.149	0.303	0.618
12	3.486	0.685	0.277	0.625
69	2.208	1.065	0.258	0.626
65	2.935	0.842	0.366	0.612
16	2.891	0.972	0.291	0.621
62	2.571	1.096	0.274	0.623
26	3.000	0.901	0.328	0.616
5	3.208	0.894	0.246	0.627
19	3.133	0.775	0.328	0.618
24	2.922	0.919	0.257	0.626
22	2.949	0.982	*-0.149	0.682
41	2.534	1.060	*-0.256	0.700

\* Items 22 and 41 are left out and the alpha reliability coefficient of the category rises from 0.641 to 0.743.

TABLE 6.5: Item analysis of the category: extrinsic motivation.

Number of subjects	294
Number of items	15
Alpha reliability coefficient	0.749
Mean	47.854
Standard deviation	5.713

ITEM	MEAN	S	CORRELATION WITH TOTAL	ALPHA IF ITEM IS LEFT OUT
34	3.037	0.943	0.442	0.726
71	3.395	0.758	0.443	0.728
60	3.347	0.879	0.512	0.719
45	2.969	0.794	0.304	0.741
58	3.255	0.805	0.417	0.730
25	3.160	0.808	0.390	0.732
51	3.684	0.595	0.385	0.735
8	3.272	0.883	0.359	0.735
17	3.537	0.723	0.386	0.733
60	3.347	0.879	0.512	0.719
48	2.956	0.810	0.295	0.742
64	3.660	0.572	0.373	0.736
53	2.439	0.898	*0.123	0.760
37	2.708	0.852	*0.151	0.756
23	3.088	0.834	0.254	0.746

\* Items 53 and 37 are retained because the alpha value does not increase significantly when the two items are left out.

TABLE 6.6: Item analysis of the category: pedagogical deprivation.

Number of subjects	294
Number of items	13
Alpha reliability coefficient	0.606 (*0.687)
Mean	35.537
Standard deviation	4.793

ITEM	MEAN	S	CORRELATION WITH TOTAL	ALPHA IF ITEM IS LEFT OUT
55	3.551	0.785	0.492	0.546
33	3.418	0.904	0.356	0.566
57	3.344	0.827	0.310	0.576
15	3.330	0.929	0.424	0.552
14	3.092	0.819	0.423	0.556
9	3.704	0.694	0.342	0.575
11	3.208	0.814	0.339	0.572
66	3.163	0.883	0.331	0.572
38	3.031	1.036	0.293	0.578
2	2.517	1.044	0.096	0.620
44	3.180	0.941	0.175	0.601
13	2.585	0.941	*0.078	0.620
4	1.918	0.978	*-0.187	0.670

\* Items 13 and 4 are left out and the alpha reliability coefficient of the category rises from 0.606 to 0.687.

TABLE 6.7: Item analysis of the category: political socialisation.

Number of subjects	294
Number of items	6
Alpha reliability coefficient	0.498
Mean	17.378
Standard deviation	3.197

ITEM	MEAN	S	CORRELATION WITH TOTAL	ALPHA IF ITEM IS LEFT OUT
42	2.846	1.123	0.337	0.404
20	2.447	1.034	0.256	0.452
28	3.014	0.972	0.244	0.458
6	3.454	0.869	0.273	0.446
27	2.840	0.946	0.218	0.471
3	2.778	1.035	0.200	0.482

All the items in this category are retained.

TABLE 6.8: Item analysis of the category: school administration.

Number of subjects	294
Number of items	9
Alpha reliability coefficient	0.181 (*0.415)
Mean	14.105
Standard deviation	3.162

ITEM	MEAN	S	CORRELATION WITH TOTAL	ALPHA IF ITEM IS LEFT OUT
61	2.378	1.092	0.179	0.080
36	2.830	1.044	0.138	0.112
67	2.000	1.019	0.166	0.095
68	2.316	1.057	0.269	0.015
47	2.473	1.047	0.054	0.170
46	2.109	1.003	0.015	0.194
39	2.316	0.854	*-0.123	0.259
18	3.374	0.872	*-0.052	0.225
35	2.395	0.886	*-0.111	0.256

\* Items 39, 18 and 35 are left out and the alpha reliability coefficient of the category rises from 0.181 to 0.415.



TABLE 6.9: Item analysis of the category: attitude towards school.

Number of subjects	294
Number of items	13
Alpha reliability coefficient	0.580 (*0.662)
Mean	37.218
Standard deviation	3.970

ITEM	MEAN	S	CORRELATION WITH TOTAL	ALPHA IF ITEM IS LEFT OUT
1	3.486	0.680	0.283	0.552
10	3.595	0.653	0.389	0.535
31	3.446	0.663	0.323	0.545
32	2.759	0.878	0.190	0.570
40	3.367	0.835	0.359	0.533
43			*0.003	0.620
49	3.466	0.718	0.360	0.537
50	3.738	0.642	0.377	0.537
52	3.160	0.833	0.140	0.579
54	3.541	0.694	0.305	0.548
59	3.395	0.818	0.351	0.535
72			*-0.007	0.621
70	3.265	0.845	0.238	0.559

\* Items 43 and 72 are left out and the alpha reliability coefficient of the category rises from 0.580 to 0.662.

The maximum attainable score for the field attitude towards school (ATS) was forty four and the minimum was eleven. The average value obtained in the empirical study is 37.22 with a standard deviation of 3.97. The average obtained (37.22)

indicates that the students' attitude towards school is highly positive.

A summary of the reliability coefficients for each category is given in table 6.10.

TABLE 6.10: Reliability coefficients for each category

CATEGORY	ALPHA COEFFICIENT	NO. OF ITEMS
Attitude towards school	0.662	11
School experience	0.743	14
Extrinsic motivation	0.749	15
Pedagogical deprivation	0.687	11
Political socialisation	0.498	6
School administration	0.415	6
	TOTAL	63

According to Mulder (1989:73), the categories political socialisation and school administration have moderate reliabilities and all other variables have high reliability coefficients. The categories are therefore considered to be reliable in measuring the desired constructs.

#### 6.4 TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

From the results of both the factor analysis and item analysis, five factors were identified. Consequently, the following null hypotheses are formulated so that the empirical data can be treated in an orderly manner and deductions made.

#### 6.4.1 HYPOTHESIS 1

As null hypothesis it is stated that there is no significant correlation between attitude towards school and, respectively, school experience, extrinsic motivation, pedagogical deprivation, political socialisation and school administration.

In order to test the hypothesis, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated and the results are given in table 6.11.

TABLE 6.11: Correlation coefficients of ATS and other variables.

	ATS	SE	EM	PD	PS	SA
ATS	-	0.405	0.493	0.516	0.276	-0.115*

N = 294;  $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

Statistically, the results in table 6.11 indicate that attitude towards school correlates at the 5% level significantly negative with school administration ( $r = -0.115$ ). Attitude towards school correlates at the 1% level significantly positive with, respectively, school experience ( $r = 0.405$ ), extrinsic motivation ( $r = 0.493$ ), pedagogical deprivation ( $r = 0.516$ ) and political socialisation ( $r = 0.276$ ).

Statistically, the null hypothesis is thus rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, namely that there is a significant correlation between attitude towards school and,

respectively, school experience, extrinsic motivation, pedagogical deprivation, political socialisation and school administration.

According to Mulder (1989:73), however, the results in table 6.11 indicate that attitude towards school correlates moderately with school experience ( $r=0.405$ ), extrinsic motivation ( $r=0.493$ ) and pedagogical deprivation ( $r=0.516$ ) and that it correlates low with political socialisation ( $r=0.276$ ) and negatively very low with school administration ( $r=-0.115$ ).

In other words, even though the correlation between attitude towards school and political socialisation is statistically significant, the correlation is nevertheless low. Similarly, the correlation between attitude towards school and school administration is negatively very low.

#### 6.4.2 HYPOTHESIS 2

As null hypothesis it is stated that there is no significant difference in the mean attitude towards school of the male students as a group and the mean attitude towards school of the female students as a group.

The t test was used to test the hypothesis and the results are given in table 6.12.

TABLE 6.12: A comparison of attitude towards school for males and females

GROUP	N	MEAN	S	T	DF	p
MALE	149	36.785	3.708	1.902	292	0.058
FEMALE	145	37.662	4.189			

The value of  $t$  is statistically not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ) and hence the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. In other words, the data in table 6.12 supports the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the attitude towards school of male and female students.

#### 6.4.3 HYPOTHESIS 3

As null hypothesis it is stated that there is no significant difference in the mean attitude towards school of a group of students staying with parents and the mean attitude towards school of a group of students staying with guardians.

The  $t$  test was used to test this hypothesis and the results are given in table 6.13.

TABLE 6.13: A comparison of attitude towards school for students staying with parents or guardians

GROUP	N	MEAN	S	DF	T-VALUE	p
STAYING WITH PARENTS	236	37.250	4.017	292	-0.281	0.779
STAYING WITH GUARDIANS	58	37.086	3.803			

The data in table 6.13 shows that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected ( $p > 0.05$ ). This means that the group of students who stay with parents do not differ significantly with the group of students staying with guardians as far as attitude towards school is concerned.

#### 6.4.4 HYPOTHESIS 4

As null hypothesis it is stated that there is no significant difference in the mean attitude towards school of a group of students in respectively, standards eight, nine and ten.

To test the hypothesis use was made of the F test and the results are given in table 6.14.

TABLE 6.14: A comparison of ATS for different standards

ATS	SCHOOL STANDARD (STD)						F- VALUE
	STD 8 (N=105)		STD 9 (N=100)		STD 10 (N=89)		
	MEAN	S	MEAN	S	MEAN	S	0.76*
	37.029	4.819	37.030	3.353	37.652	3.481	

(\* F = 0.76; DF = 2, 291;  $p > 0.05$ )

On the basis of the results in table 6.14, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected since the value of F is not significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus the attitude towards school of students in standards eight, nine and ten do not differ significantly.

#### 6.5 PREDICTION OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL.

The criterion (dependent variable) is attitude towards school (ATS). The independent variables are school experience (SE), extrinsic motivation (EM), pedagogical deprivation (PD), political socialisation (PS), school administration (SA), mother occupation (MOC), father education (FOC), gender (M/F), students' age (AGE) and school standard (STD).

With the help of stepwise regression analysis, the variance caused in the criterion by a linear combination of independent variables is determined (Mulder 1989:100-101). The results are shown in table 6.15.

TABLE 6.15: Stepwise regression for predicting ATS

VARIABLES	VARIANCE (%)	DF	F-VALUE*
EM	17.5	1;121	25.72
EM+PS	29.5	2;120	25.08
EM+PS+SE	34.1	3;119	20.54
EM+PS+SE+PD	38.2	4;118	18.20
EM+PS+SE+PD+MOC	40.3	5;117	15.79
EM+PS+SE+PD+MOC+AGE	42.0	6;116	14.02
EM+PS+SE+PD+MOC+AGE+SA	42.7	7;115	12.24
EM+PS+SE+PD+MOC+AGE+SA+M/F	43.2	8;114	10.85

\*  $p < 0.01$

The addition of school standard and father occupation did not significantly increase the percentage of variance explained and they were therefore not included in the regression equation.

From table 6.15 it can be deduced that:

- (a) There is no single most important predictor of attitude toward school among the independent variables used in this study. The single variable which explains more variance on its own than the other variables is extrinsic motivation - accounting for 17,5 % of the variance in attitude towards school.
- (b) The maximum independent variables used in this study accounts for 43,2 % of the variance in attitude towards school.

## 6.6 CONCLUSION

### 6.6.1 FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor analysis was carried out and five factors were identified after the Scree test was used:

- FACTOR 1 : School experience
- FACTOR 2 : Extrinsic motivation
- FACTOR 3 : Pedagogical deprivation
- FACTOR 4 : Political socialisation
- FACTOR 5 : School administration



Items 1, 10, 31, 32, 40, 43, 49, 50, 52, 54, 59, 72 and 70 were not included in the factor analysis since they constitute the dependent variable (ATS). Also, items 73 to 77 were not included in the factor analysis since they constitute biographical information.

#### 6.6.2 ITEM ANALYSIS

An item analysis was carried out for each factor (category). Nine items (22, 41, 13, 4, 39, 18, 35, 43, 72) were left out because they did not correlate significantly with their respective category totals.

#### 6.6.3 RELIABILITY

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were calculated for each category. The following values were found:

SE : alpha = 0.662	PS : alpha = 0.498
EM : alpha = 0.749	SA : alpha = 0.415
PD : alpha = 0.687	ATS: alpha = 0.662

The reliability coefficients for the categories attitude towards school, school experience, extrinsic motivation and pedagogical deprivation are high and those for political socialisation and school administration are moderate.

#### 6.6.4 HYPOTHESES TESTING

The following conclusions were arrived at after the testing of the hypotheses:

- (a) There is a significant correlation between attitude towards school and, respectively, school experience, extrinsic motivation, pedagogical deprivation, political socialisation ( $p < 0.01$ ) and school administration ( $p < 0.05$ ).
- (b) There is no significant difference in the attitude toward school between male and female students.
- (c) There is no significant difference in the attitude toward school of students staying with their parents and students staying with their guardians.
- (d) There is no significant difference in the attitude toward school of standards eight, nine and ten students.

#### 6.6.5 PREDICTING ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL USING STEPWISE REGRESSION

Stepwise regression analysis was used to determine which independent variable or combination of independent variables can best predict attitude towards school. It was found that no single independent variable is the sole major predictor of attitude towards school. The maximum variance in attitude towards school that can be explained by a combination of variables, is 43.2%.

## 6.7 REMARKS

The objectives of the empirical investigation as given in section 5.1 has now been achieved. The conclusions drawn from the results, recommendations and their implications and limitations of the study will be discussed in chapter 7.

## CHAPTER 7

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The basic aim of this research is to determine socio-political factors related to the attitude towards school held by black secondary school students. This problem has been investigated in-depth in the previous chapters. The purpose of this chapter is to give a synopsis of the research undertaken. This makes it imperative to recapitulate on the statement of the problem, demarcation of the field of study and the aims and method of this investigation.

Having discussed the foregoing, the main findings derived from both the literature survey and the empirical research will be discussed. This will be followed by conclusions drawn from and the limitations of the investigation. Thereafter the recommendations and suggestions for future research will be presented. A few observations are made at the end of this study.

### 7.1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In chapter one the problem which the researcher was confronted with in this study was described. As a result, two research questions were formulated, namely:

1. What is the attitude towards school held by black secondary school students in South Africa?
2. What is the relative contribution of parental influence, peer influence, the media, age, gender, the school, political violence, and parental socio-economic status on students' attitude towards school?

The socio-political factors given above were shown to have significant influence on people's attitudes. This research has also made it clear that the milieu of the adolescent has a far-reaching influence on the latter's development and later performance at school. Poor performance at school and behavioural problems have been shown to indicate a warped socio-political environment which has grave consequences for children's attitude towards school.

### 7.1.2 DEMARICATION OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

This research was undertaken on black secondary school children in the East Rand, Benoni. Students in standards eight to ten were used as subjects. All the 306 subjects used were from one school: 110 standard eights, 108 standard nines and 88 standard

tens. There were 149 males and 145 females. The mean age of the subjects was 18.1 years.

A pilot study was undertaken and it identified socio-political factors as the variable(s) that could be used in this investigation. The literature study further identified the following variables: age, school standard, socio-economic status, parental factors, peer factors, scholastic factors, the media and political factors.

### 7.1.3 THE AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The research which was done can be divided into two parts. The first part is a literature study or theoretical research and the second part is the practical or empirical research. Each part had its own objectives.

#### 7.1.3.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE LITERATURE STUDY

The objectives set out for the literature study were:

- (a) To determine the meaning and attributes of the construct attitude - particularly attitude towards school.
- (b) To investigate mechanism which can be followed to measure attitude towards school from a pedagogical perspective.

- (c) To identify and define socio-political factors which have been shown by previous research to be having an influence on people's attitudes.
- (d) To identify operational constructs that could be used in the construction of items which measure socio-political factors influencing students' attitude towards school.

#### 7.1.3.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

The objectives set out for the empirical investigation were:

- (a) To construct a questionnaire for measuring variables identified in the literature study, namely attitude toward school, parental factors, peer factors, school factors, the mass media, political violence, parental socio-economic status, school standard, age and the sex of the student.
- (b) To use appropriate statistical techniques to determine the following:
  - \* The correlation between attitude towards school and the variables school factors, parental factors, peer factors, the mass media and political violence.
  - \* To determine whether there are significant differences in the attitude towards school of students when gender,

school standard and staying with parents or guardians are used as dividers.

- \* To determine from the questionnaire which general factors or constructs can be identified as determinants of attitude towards school.
- \* To determine which of the variables or combination of variables are the best predictors of attitude towards school.

- (c) To make recommendations for the solution of possible problematic situations in order to improve scholastic performance of black adolescents and the quality of black education in general.

#### 7.1.4 THE METHOD OF RESEARCH

The literature study was undertaken to investigate socio-political factors influencing students' attitude towards school. Operational constructs were identified which could be used to measure the variables given in section 7.1.3.

Having completed the foregoing, the researcher undertook an empirical investigation. Based on the operational constructs identified in the literature study, items to measure the variables were constructed and compiled into a questionnaire. The questionnaire was then evaluated by several people, including teachers and professors at the University of South Africa. Several changes to the wording and structure of some items were



made and the questionnaire was then administered to a small number of standard eight students. Words which created problems for students were changed and the questionnaire was finalised.

Permission was granted by the principal of the school and the questionnaire was administered to 306 students. The completed forms were checked, coded and then transferred into the computer for statistical analyses. The Statistical Analysis System was used. The results were tabled out and interpreted and thereafter conclusions, findings and recommendations will be made based on the results of the empirical study.

## 7.2 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS FROM THE LITERATURE STUDY

### 7.2.1 SOCIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS' ATTITUDES

#### 7.2.1.1 THE FAMILY

Parents' actions influence the child's social life, self concept, attitudes and performance at school. Parents also influence the manner in which a child perceives his/her family environment. Research indicates that behaviour is affected by the way individuals perceive and interpret events. As a result, it was imperative that children's perceptions of their family experiences should be investigated, especially the effect such perceptions have on students' attitude towards school.

Research indicates that the following aspects have an influence on children's perceptions of their families, and consequently their attitude towards school: parenting styles, family interactions, number of children in family, and parental acceptance or rejection.

Research indicates that children who perceive themselves to be rejected tend to develop the following social, behavioural and emotional problems:

- \* Children become defensively independent. Symptoms include withdrawal, rejection of parents and inappropriate social behaviour.
- \* Children become emotionally unresponsive, defensive and are unable to relate to other people.
- \* Children may become hostile, aggressive or passive-aggressive if parents tend to be hostile or aggressive.
- \* Children may suffer a loss in positive self esteem and view themselves as unworthy and unlovable.
- \* Children become afraid of exploring, seeing the world as an unfriendly, hostile, insecure and an unpleasant place.
- \* Children often become less emotionally stable, reacting to minor stresses with emotional upsets and fits of anger.

Research further indicates that positive parental support and encouragement help the child to venture and to explore the world. It helps the child to develop a realistic perspective of his experiences and it enhances the child's self-concept and attitude towards school. Parental support also influences the child's level of educational and occupational expectations.

Parental socio-economic status also influences the child's behaviour in several ways. Children from different social classes are socialised differently - others receiving a stimulating environment and others a deprived environment. Parental socio-economic status also influences children's educational and occupational aspirations but seems to have no effect on students' attitude towards school.

#### 7.2.1.2 PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Research has shown that adolescents need relationships with peers for adequate self-actualization to occur. Close friendship, for example, has been shown to avert loneliness, to help individuals cope more effectively with stressful events, to help individuals with psychological adjustment and with social and academic adjustment to school.

The need for social acceptance and friendship is so strong that adolescents may readily conform to group norms and values in conflict with norms and values upheld by their parents and by

society. Adolescents conform willingly because they need friendships, self-exploration and self-assertion. Depending on the type of peers the child associates with, he/she may be influenced positively or negatively.

Research carried out by Shelley (1975:117) shows that black adolescent peer groups usually consist of four to five friends of similar age and sex with no assigned roles of leadership nor specified criteria for membership. Also, leisure activities were limited and narrow, comprising mainly of church related activities, football activities, movies and political activities.

It became clear from the literature that black adolescents were influenced to a great extent by their friends' political viewpoints as opposed to their parents' viewpoints. Furthermore, it was shown that adolescents' perceptions of school and their behaviour become similar, over time, to those of their friends.

#### 7.2.1.3 THE SCHOOL

Events taking place within schools have been shown to influence students' attitude towards school. Schools give adolescents opportunities to make friends, to participate in social activities and to learn. On the other hand, gangs, enemies, overcrowding, aggressive teachers, and the like, are deterrents and impacts negatively on students' attitude towards school.

Adolescents are affected negatively by several facets of school life: school policies controlling dress, smoking, and the like; lack of vocationally related curricula; high failure rates; poor relationships with teachers; gangs in school; drug abuse; et cetera.

#### 7.2.1.4 THE MEDIA

Educational projects implemented on television, radio, newspapers and magazines have been shown to impact positively on students' attitude towards school. Students from disadvantaged schools and communities are exposed to well resourced and well presented lessons. Such projects circumvent problems posed by teacher shortages, lack of equipment and physical facilities.

Exposure to violent films, pornography, propaganda literature and the like, on the other hand, have harmful consequences on adolescents. It questions moral standards upheld by schools and society, makes teachers to look ridiculous, despises hard work but espouses cheating, robbing and other equally distractive activities. In this regard students' attitude towards school are influenced negatively.

#### 7.2.1.5 GENDER

Research indicates that students' perceptions of their own achievements are influenced, amongst others, by gender. Further, boys were found to show more favourable attitude towards science than girls. In general, however, girls have - on average - more positive attitude towards school than their male counterparts.

Research shows that some conditions found in schools (teaching methods, curricula, interpersonal relations) are in some aspects more favourable to boys than to girls. Students' attitude towards school are consequently influenced by such gender related issues.

#### 7.2.2 POLITICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS' ATTITUDE

It was made clear in the literature study that politics and education interact with each other and are closely intertwined.

In the South African context, the following realities existed:

- \* Education is financed primarily by the state with significant disparity in funding between different racial groups.
- \* The complex nature of the education bureaucracy consumes money which could have been spent on school children.

- \* Political groups that were opposing the government discredited the education system, schools and school administrators in the eyes of students. All educational authorities (including principals and teachers) were treated with mistrust by the students.
- \* Black schools are faced with poor facilities, under-trained and unqualified teachers, mass overcrowding, and the like.
- \* The bulk of the black youth lacks technical and vocational training. Very few students do study natural and applied sciences. They are also under-represented in apprenticeships and skills training. Consequently, the bulk of the black youth is faced with unemployment.
- \* Black students experience problems as far as the teaching and usage of languages are concerned. Research shows, for example, that students' competency in English is poor.
- \* Political violence (perceived by blacks to have been initiated by the state) has spilled into homes and schools, leaving a trail of hooliganism, vandalism and naked aggression.
- \* Anxiety, constrained freedom of choice and moral dilemmas are a result of children being exposed to violence on a continual basis.

\* Frequent and violent disruptions of school activities have undermined the seriousness and importance of learning. Learning, as a result, has turned to be an unworthy exercise, and students' attitude towards school has been severely hampered.

### 7.2.3 ATTITUDE AND ITS MEASUREMENT

Attitude is a psychological construct that is not directly measurable. Its measurement relies on measuring certain dispositions that serve as indicators of peoples' attitudes. The indicators of attitude must therefore be carefully defined so that operational constructs could be formed. The latter are then used to construct items for the measurement of attitude.

Research work done by Anderson (1985:352-4) differentiates attitude from other affective characteristics by using affective features of target, direction and intensity. In this regard attitude is considered as a moderately intense emotion that prepares or predisposes an individual to respond consistently in a favourable or unfavourable manner when confronted with a particular object.

The target of attitude in this study is the school. That is, the students' cognitive, affective and behavioural tendency to react to all aspects of the school. These aspects were then determined by the empirical investigation.



### 7.3 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

From the analysis and interpretation of data in chapter six, the following important findings and conclusions have emerged. These are not universal or generally valid findings, but apply to the research group under investigation only.

#### 7.3.1 THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL OF BLACK STUDENTS

The results of the empirical research shows that black adolescents used as subjects in this study have a positive attitude towards school, inspite of all the problems identified in the theoretical study. From a maximum average of 44, the average obtained by the research group equals 37.2.

#### 7.3.2 IDENTIFICATION OF SOCIO-POLITICAL FACTORS

From the factor analysis which was carried out on the items of the questionnaire, the following five factors were identified (excluding the factor attitude towards school):

- \* School experience
- \* Extrinsic motivation
- \* Pedagogical deprivation
- \* Political socialisation
- \* School administration

The factor school experience includes the following aspects of school life: teaching methods, examinations, learning, study, homework, extramural activities, and the like. The empirical results thus agree with the findings of the literature study (section 2.4) that school factors are related to students' attitude towards school.

The factor extrinsic motivation refers to the stimulation the adolescent receives primarily from parents but also from such sources as the audio, the print and the audio-visual media. These stimuli have an influence on the adolescents' attitude towards school (sections 2.2 and 2.5.1). The empirical research thus agrees with the theoretical research as far as this factor is concerned.

The factor pedagogical deprivation involves items wherein the adolescent receives negative support from parents, friends and the school. Such pedagogical neglect has been shown in the literature study (sections 2.2.2; 2.3.1 and 2.4) to impact negatively on students' attitude towards school. In this regard also, the findings of the empirical study are in agreement with the theoretical study.

The factor political socialisation includes items identified in chapter three as having an influence on students' attitude towards school, particularly black students. Here also, the results of both the theoretical and practical research are in agreement.

The factor school administration also refers to factors identified in chapter three as having negative influence on students' attitude towards school. Items in this factor include poor teaching methods, overcrowding, lack of vocational training, and the like.

### 7.3.3 THE CORRELATION BETWEEN ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL AND THE OTHER VARIABLES

The results of the empirical study indicate that there is a significant correlation between attitude towards school and, respectively, school experience, extrinsic motivation, pedagogical deprivation, political socialisation and school administration.

It is concluded from the results that students with positive school experiences, receiving positive motivation and coming from supportive environments have high attitude towards school, and vice versa. These findings are in agreement with the findings from previous research.

The low positive correlation of political socialisation with attitude towards school indicates that a student with a high attitude towards school could have either a high or low political socialisation. The low correlation was unexpected since previous research indicates that political factors do play a significant role in the formation of students' attitude towards school.

The inverse relationship between attitude towards school and school administration was to be expected because the items in school administration actually referred to poor school administration. The inverse relationship indicates that poor school administration has a negative impact on students' attitude towards school, and vice versa.

#### 7.3.4 GENDER, SCHOOL STANDARD AND STAYING WITH PARENTS OR GUARDIANS AS DIVIDERS.

Contrary to other research studies, the empirical results of this study indicate that there is no significant difference in the attitude towards school held by students in standards eight, nine and ten. Because of the high failure rate, students in standard eight, for example, are more or less of the same age group as most standard tens. Consequently they tend to have similar attitude towards school.

The results of the empirical study also indicate that the attitude towards school of boys is the same as the attitude towards school of girls. On average, previous research reports girls as having more favourable attitude towards school than boys. The conflicting findings could possibly be attributed to the fact that black children are socialised differently from white children.

The results of the empirical research indicate that there is no significant difference in the attitude towards school of a group

of students staying with their parents and the attitude towards school of a group of students staying with guardians. These findings indicate that students who are not staying with their parents receive equally adequate scholastic support from their guardians, and also that in blacks the extended family plays a significant role in child rearing.

#### 7.3.5 PREDICTORS OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOL

It was found that there is no single most important variable that could be used to predict students' attitude towards school in this study. However, a combination of variables in this study explained 43.2% of the variance in attitude towards school.

#### 7.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

A number of limitations are inherent in the present study:

- \* The sample is possibly skewed since a number of students were absent on the days the questionnaire was administered. The majority of students who answered the questionnaire could well have been those with positive attitude towards school only.
- \* Use was not made of a standardised instrument to measure attitude towards school.

- \* Simplifying items might have removed the essence of the attribute initially intended to be measured. The major reason for this being that students' competency in English is poor.
- \* There is a possibility that some of the respondents did not interpret certain items correctly or that they did not give honest answers.
- \* The timing of the research could also yield different results, with attitudes changing during the course of the year.
- \* The research was carried out on students from one school in the Benoni area only.
- \* The results of this study need then be interpreted within the limitations given above.

## 7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### 7.5.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

#### 7.5.1.1 THE SAMPLE

The research population for such a study should preferably involve only one standard, say standard tens. This will help in eliminating problems of word difficulty when different standards

are involved. Students from different schools should be used to eliminate situational factors.

#### 7.5.1.2 THE INSTRUMENT

Standard eight students should be employed instead of standard tens for the pilot study as the former gave a better idea of the clarity of question formulations.

The number of items should also be reduced because students were impatient when filling in the questionnaire.

#### 7.5.2 ASSISTING PARENTS

A concerted effort from educationists, the Education Department and community leaders is required to come together and to assist parents with the following:

- \* Parents should be encouraged to create a stimulating and supportive environment in their homes and should be given expert advice and guidance in this regard by a committee made up of representatives from the Education Department and the community.
- \* Parents should be given intensive and continuous training with regard to monitoring their children's school work. In this regard teachers and educationists could be instrumental.

- \* Parents' educational level need to be raised in order for them to understand the schooling process. To raise the educational level of parents there should be a substantial increase of existing adult literacy classes and of educational programmes for the higher classes.
- \* Parents should encourage their children to attend school regularly and see to it that this is done. They should also check on their children's progress regularly and try to keep in touch with their teachers. Teachers, in turn, should provide parents with feedback on the progress of their children. This will enable parents to assist children with their work timeously.

#### 7.5.3 RECONSTRUCTION OF SCHOOLS

- \* Mass overcrowding in schools is caused by a bottleneck formed by high standard ten failure rates. Finishing schools, for standard ten students only, would greatly remove the burden of overcrowding from mainstream schools.
- \* Adequate security and workers are needed to maintain school buildings and facilities intact and clean.
- \* Principals of schools, and the school administrators, must maintain a firm and non-compromising position as far as school attendance and school work is concerned. Community



organizations must also support the principals in this regard.

- \* A professional code of conduct for teachers should be drafted and implemented. Teachers violating the code of conduct should be retributed accordingly. Teachers' improper behaviour could thus be curbed.
- \* The state must speedily improve the resources which are inadequate in most black schools and must make an endeavour to equalise education for all racial groups in South Africa.

#### 7.5.4 NORMALIZING THE COUNTRY'S POLITICS

Since students' attitude towards school are influenced by the prevailing politics, the new government of national unity must create a conducive atmosphere for learning. Corruption, nepotism, inefficiency, and the like must be eradicated quickly so as to give a good picture of the education system.

Major strides should be made to implement technical and vocational education in order to compensate for the backlog which has occurred over the years.

#### 7.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- 7.6.1 A standardised attitude towards school scale for black adolescents must be constructed.

7.6.2 Further research is required that will identify other factors related to students' attitude towards school.

7.6.3 Longitudinal studies are needed to determine whether the attitude towards school of students changes over several years and over different time periods per year.

## 7.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The researcher has been confronted with a situation in which mediocrity, poor performance and lack of drive predominate in the majority of black schools. It dawned in the researcher that factors from without the student could be responsible for this state of affairs or could at least act as catalysts to maintain the status quo.

The result of the pilot study carried out by the researcher hinted the effect of socio-political factors. A literature study was undertaken and factors revealed were compiled into a questionnaire to measure students' attitude towards school and the influence of socio-political factors. From the results of the theoretical and empirical research several findings and conclusions were made.

The research results identified the following socio-political factors as being related to attitude towards school: school experience, extrinsic motivation, pedagogical deprivation, political socialisation and school administration. The following

variables were used as dividers: school standard, staying with parents or with guardians and gender.

However, not all factors were identified and it is hoped that further research will help in this regard. This is evidenced by the fact that the subjects of this study showed a positive attitude towards school. Therefore, other factors might be responsible for the general despair seen in our schools.

Finally, the slight improvement in the matriculation results at the end of the 1994 academic year may be an indication of good things to come. The words of the apostle Paul keeps on ringing in one's ears: "..... but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians chapter 3 verse 13-14; from the New American Standard Bible).

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APPENDIXQUESTIONNAIREINSTRUCTIONS

1. This is a research questionnaire and NOT a test.
2. There is no wrong or right answer because we want to know your own opinion, so please be free to give an HONEST answer.
3. Your answers are strictly confidential. No one else will see your answers except the researchers only. Note that we do not require your name.
4. Answer all the questions; do not skip any question.
5. Answer as quickly as possible but remember to answer all the questions.
6. Ask your teacher for help if you do not understand any part of the questionnaire.
7. READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY AND THEN INDICATE YOUR ANSWER AS FOLLOWS:

Encircle A if you AGREE with the statement, thus      SA A D SD  
Encircle SA if you STRONGLY AGREE with it, thus      SA A D SD  
Encircle SD if you STRONGLY DISAGREE with it, thus      SA A D SD  
Encircle D if you DISAGREE with the statement, thus      SA A D SD

8. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

(Please turn over to begin)

STRONGLY AGREE =SA;                      AGREE=A;  
STRONGLY DISAGREE=SD;                      DISAGREE=D.

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- |   |    |   |   |    |
|---|----|---|---|----|
| 1. I am proud of my school.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| *2. I enjoy myself most when I'm alone,<br>away from other people.                        | SA | A | D | SD |
| *3. Learning three languages at school<br>is difficult.                                   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 4. Our school facilities (classes,<br>toilets, playground) are well kept<br>and clean.    | SA | A | D | SD |
| 5. My friends influence me to study and<br>behave well at school.                         | SA | A | D | SD |
| *6. It is good to express one's feeling<br>by writing slogans on the walls.               | SA | A | D | SD |
| 7. Most teachers in this school are fair.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 8. I feel close to my parents.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| *9. My parents say that school is not<br>important.                                       | SA | A | D | SD |
| 10. I enjoy attending school.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| *11. My friends influence me to stay out of<br>class during lessons.                      | SA | A | D | SD |
| 12. The things we learn at school help me<br>in my daily life.                            | SA | A | D | SD |
| 13. When a person hurts or injure me, I turn<br>the other cheek and forgive him.          | SA | A | D | SD |
| *14. I think educational programmes on<br>television are boring.                          | SA | A | D | SD |
| *15. I do the things that my friends say more<br>than things said by my parents/teachers. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 16. I feel at ease to discuss any problems<br>that I have with my parents.                | SA | A | D | SD |
| 17. My parents praise me if I have done<br>well at school.                                | SA | A | D | SD |
| 18. School uniform should be made<br>compulsory for all students.                         | SA | A | D | SD |

STRONGLY AGREE =SA;                    AGREE=A;  
STRONGLY DISAGREE=SD;                DISAGREE=D.

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|---|----|---|---|----|
| 19. Even if I don't like a person,<br>I still try to help him.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| *20. It is good to protest (riot) against<br>teachers who use corporal punishment.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 21. My teachers are able to communicate<br>the subject matter properly.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| *22. Student activities (clubs, plays,<br>parties) are a waste of time.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 23. Teachers on television explain the<br>subject matter clearly.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 24. I am satisfied with the way the<br>administration involves students in<br>making decisions about uniform,<br>assemblies, punishment, etc. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 25. I like reading newspaper articles<br>on education.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 26. I usually complete my homework before<br>I watch television.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| *27. I get into trouble due to my friends.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 28. An important thing about school is<br>the friends you meet.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 29. The textbooks that we read at school<br>are good.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 30. I think that the education we get at<br>school is of a high quality.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 31. I work and try hard in school.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 32. I like the games we have at school.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| *33. My parents tell me not to worry about<br>school.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 34. I admire my parents.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 35. I get invited out by friends as often<br>as I like.   | SA | A | D | SD |

STRONGLY AGREE =SA;                    AGREE=A;  
STRONGLY DISAGREE=SD;                DISAGREE=D.

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|--|----|---|---|----|
| *36. School does not help in training a person for the job he/she is going to do.                  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 37. I am kind to people even if they do things I don't believe in.                                 | SA | A | D | SD |
| *38. I think it is unfair to be taught all subjects in English.                                    | SA | A | D | SD |
| 39. People who make speeches stirring people up cause trouble.                                     | SA | A | D | SD |
| *40. If I could, I would leave school tomorrow.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| *41. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is a good rule for living.                        | SA | A | D | SD |
| *42. It is good to destroy government property if the government refuse to meet students' demands. | SA | A | D | SD |
| *43. My school work worries me.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 44. The principal of our school is fair.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 45. I think listening to radio lessons is beneficial.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 46. I think that my parents are strict.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| *47. I cannot concentrate at school because of the noise.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 48. Lessons taught over the radio are helpful.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 49. I feel happy at school.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| *50. School is a waste of time.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 51. My parents love me.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| *52. I have no friends in this school.   | SA | A | D | SD |
| 53. I find the political discussions I have with my friends to be valuable.                        | SA | A | D | SD |
| 54. I like to hear people saying nice things about school.   | SA | A | D | SD |



STRONGLY AGREE =SA;                      AGREE=A;  
 STRONGLY DISAGREE=SD;                  DISAGREE=D.

- |  |    |   |   |    |
|--|----|---|---|----|
| *55. I think that my parents do not care about me.                                 | SA | A | D | SD |
| 56. I think that our school buildings are of the same standard as those of whites. | SA | A | D | SD |
| *57. My parents used to punish me without explanation.                             | SA | A | D | SD |
| 58. I enjoy reading magazines, newspapers and novels.                              | SA | A | D | SD |
| *59. I feel like skipping (dodging) school.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 60. My parents encourage me with my school work.                                   | SA | A | D | SD |
| *61. Teachers do not complete the school syllabus before we are examined.          | SA | A | D | SD |
| 62. I think that all school children should pay for their education.               | SA | A | D | SD |
| 63. Our teachers give us opportunities to participate during lessons.              | SA | A | D | SD |
| 64. My parents are expecting me to do well at school.                              | SA | A | D | SD |
| 65. My teachers try new and interesting ways of teaching.                          | SA | A | D | SD |
| *66. My parents do not ask me about my progress at school.                         | SA | A | D | SD |
| *67. Our school is overcrowded (full of students).                                 | SA | A | D | SD |
| *68. Some of my teachers act like they are tired of teaching.                      | SA | A | D | SD |
| 69. Examinations written by white students are of the same standard as ours.       | SA | A | D | SD |
| *70. I dislike everything about school.  | SA | A | D | SD |
| 71. My parents are interested in my progress with schoolwork.                      | SA | A | D | SD |
| 72. I think my education will be of use to me after I leave school.                | SA | A | D | SD |

73. Please indicate your gender/sex. 

MALE	FEMALE
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74. Please indicate your age in years.

75. Please indicate your school standard.

76. Please indicate whether you stay with your parents or with a guardian. 

PARENTS	GUARDIAN
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77. Please make only one tick in each column below as follows:  
 Tick the job/work which your father do under column A.  
 Tick the job/work which your mother do under column B.  
 Tick the job/work which your guardian do under column C.

MAIN OCCUPATION GROUP	A FATHER	B MOTHER	C GUARDIAN
Professional (doctor, teacher, advocate).	(01)	(01)	(01)
Management position (director, manager).	(02)	(02)	(02)
Administrative (clerk, bookkeeper).	(03)	(03)	(03)
Technical personnel (laboratory assistant).	(04)	(04)	(04)
Sales personnel (own business, dealer, salesman, etc.).	(05)	(05)	(05)
Agriculture, horticulture, forestry work.	(06)	(06)	(06)
Mine or quarry worker.	(07)	(07)	(07)
Service worker (police/prison service).	(08)	(08)	(08)
Domestic worker, garden worker, cleaner.	(09)	(09)	(09)
Unemployed.	(10)	(10)	(10)

Thank you for your cooperation.

Please check that you have answered ALL the questions!

\* Indicates items constructed in a negative sense. The scoring was reversed.

